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SHAVETAIL

By

MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

IT WAS one of the most ticklish places on the Border at that; nothing much but a low hill, an adobe ranch-house at the foot of it, and our camp to the east of that, facing the river. The Rio Grande was only six miles away from us and right across it was the Mexican village where Orozco was mobilizing his forces to take the field. He had plenty of men and horses, but few guns and cartridges; and that was where our trouble started.

I found out afterward that Orozco's outfit had us under observation constantly up to the time the big smash came. There was always a patrol of three or four men hidden up above us behind the crest of the hill. They would slide in at night, relieve the old outfit and stay hidden all the next day, watching us through their field-glasses. The horses that brought in the new bunch would carry the old relief away, and it was no trick at all for two or three dismounted men to hide away up there among the cactus and rocks.

They laid their plans pretty carefully and, by watching us constantly, knew as much about the troop as we did. All they lacked, and the thing they waited for, was a favorable opportunity to jump us.

A Troop was the outfit. A Troop of the Nth—Captain Jo Merriman's troop. But he was away and I was in command, having for second this youngster Rollins. I'll tell you more about him later . . .

Somehow there is always something to do in the cavalry, and at this time we were going through our instruction course at pistol practise, relieving the men on outpost and river guard every day to give them their required shooting.

First-Sergeant Henderson was my top kick, and ran things like clockwork. Pistol practise season is a pretty busy time in the cavalry—and especially at this time as the .45 automatics were comparatively new, and the pistol qualification course had been changed and was also new.

The pistol butts were below the camp and those Mexicans watching us from the hillside must have credited us with per-

A Story of the Border Cavalry

severance, for we plugged away at it steadily for weeks. You remember the heavy composition board silhouette targets—olive brown, all life size, each one representing a human figure either prone, kneeling, standing or mounted on horseback. And believe me, that prone figure thing—the "baby" we called it—was a tough baby to hit, shooting from the back of a horse flashing by as hard as he could push.

From reveille to retreat there was always a bunch of troopers lined up at one end of the track. A whistle would blow and one of them would gallop down lickety split, his pistol banging away—five targets, five shots; and very often five misses when he arrived at the other end. The markers stepped across the track and called the shots:

"No. 1, a hit. No. 2, a miss. No. 3, a hit . . ."

Each man would put a small square paster over the shot hole as he called out.

Then he would duck back to clear the way for the next hopeful. And every one aspired to the honor of wearing the small silvered badge with its two crossed pistols and the proud words "Pistol Expert" engraved upon it.

It went like that all day—bang! bang! bang! in strings of five shots, the calling of the markers, a silence and another string of shots with the sergeant keeping the tally of each man's hits in the book.

It is dangerous business and needs constant vigilance to avoid accidents. I was on the job every minute—having plenty to do with keeping my sector patrolled, watching out for Orozco's Red Flaggers and keeping the troop up to scratch. Had I known of those Mexicans up above us on the hill watching day and night, waiting to send word the instant we relaxed our vigilance, I would have been twice as worried. But I didn't find out about them until afterward—when it was too late.

As I said, there was another officer in the troop with me, this kid Rollins, but he was more of a burden than a help. He'd only joined up a short time previously while we were still at the Fort, before the First Squadron was sent out on Border patrol.

I can remember the first thing I ever heard him sound off.

"Sure is one tough old geezer sitting up there at headquarters," he said, his voice rasping unpleasantly—one of those flat, rather nasal voices, irritating to a sensitive ear.

It was the first remark he had made after the adjutant brought him in and introduced him. We were at dinner, all the bachelor officers of the Nth Cavalry, some twelve of us. He sat at the foot of the table, his place by right of being the newest joined shavetail. His baggage had not yet arrived and he was dressed in civilian clothes—exceedingly awful civilian clothes, reminiscent of the sartorial ideals of the pool hall and barber shop. His collar was one of those queer rubbery looking affairs, set off by an impertinent, ready made butterfly tie full of dyspeptic green and red dots.

Not only were his clothes in strong contrast to the cavalry blue and gold of the twelve lieutenants there at mess, but his face was of even greater contrast, its unhealthy pallor showing up strongly against the bronzed tan of the rest of them. There was something else it lacked, for compared to the lean strength of the others, it lacked definiteness; and while neither weak nor strong, it was like a blank page—with no lines on it.

HIS OPENING remark made every one bristle, including myself. The privilege of growling at the Old Man was not one to be taken lightly by a raw shavetail five minutes after his arrival.

Bull Manners looked up coldly.

"Whom do you mean, the colonel?" he asked, and his voice was as friendly as the whirr of a rattlesnake's tail.

"Yep," agreed the newcomer cheerfully. "He sure is a frosty old guy. I brought him a letter from my old man. Of course the old man isn't so much—"the youngster's manner became elaborately careless. "You see, my old man is governor of—" He mentioned one of the southwest States, waiting with an air of conscious self-importance to see the effect the announcement would have.

If he expected tears, cheers or loud laughter, he must have been disappointed, for the atmosphere around that table became absolutely frigid. He had pulled one of the worst bonehead plays possible for a newly joined shavetail. In the first place one did not talk about families in the Nth, that old regiment being blessed or afflicted with too many names made famous by the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, the sort of names which are indelibly treasured in the memories of all true Americans by having five-cent cigars called after them. This being the case, it naturally followed that every officer joining the Nth was accepted on his own merits, and no one gave a royal whoop whether a newcomer was the scion of a short line of generals or a long line of Kansas dirt farmers.

"Yeh?" replied Bull Manners after a moment. "Where does he work?"

"Why, in the governor's mansion, of course," the newcomer answered. "As joints go it isn't so bad—and I've seen a few joints in my time." Again the youngster was elaborately careless, as one who could tell all about living conditions in marble halls if he were so minded.

The glacial frost around the table intensified, but did this newly joined pup—Rollins, his name was—feel it? He did not.

"So your father is governor of a whole State!" It was Gramp Jackson who spoke up, his tone full of admiration and a sort of awe. "How wondehful that must be!" he breathed; then his voice full of solicitude, "But it must be very hard for you to come to this regiment and live this—ah—simple life after all that luxury!"

"Oh, I'll get used to it, I suppose." Rollins dismissed this with a careless shrug of his shoulders. "The only thing, it's going to be hard for me to be patient when I see a bunch of soldiers trying to shoot and ride. You see where I come from," he explained tactfully, "we're brought up in the saddle and play with shootin' irons from childhood."

I could see a flash go around the table; we nodded. This was going to be good!

Sing, our old Chino butler, was bringing in coffee and liqueurs. Cigars and cigarets were being lighted up. Gramp lazily rolled a cigaret and lighted it.

"And you really ride those terrible bucking hosses?" he asked respectfully —Gramp, who was a graduate of the Mounted Service School where they sit outlaws in flat saddles, and where one of the milder daily stunts is to ride horses over four-foot jumps without reins or stirrups.

"Oh, sure," returned the youngster easily. "That's child's play. Sometimes you get a mean one. Down to my father's ranch the cowpunchers used to save the worst ones up for me when I came home from school."

Every one looked deeply impressed. Bull Manners cleared his throat and spoke up—

"Are you one of those quick draw artists with the six-gun?" he asked guilelessly.

"Never failed to get my man yet!"

Rollins announced this calmly. No one smiled. Chairs were hitched closer to the table. The pack was in full cry.

"Do you find the revolver better than the pistol?" asked Bull respectfully.

Every one of us at that table could wear the little silvered badge with its crossed pistols, which meant surviving a grueling course of firing dismounted at quickly disappearing targets, and firing from a horse's back at the halt, walk, gallop and run. Bull Manners in addition held the gold medal for the National Shoot at Camp Perry, won against the whole Army, Navy and Marine Corps.

"The automatic, you mean? It isn't worth a damn. Give me the good old .38 revolver every time," the young fellow answered without a second's hesitation.

The Nth had just come from Jolo where attempts to stop wild eyed Moros with the .38 had resulted unpleasantly for every one except the Moros concerned. Then we had changed to the automatic pistol and it was the Moros' turn to be disgusted. The Nth was pretty strong for the heavy automatic, and had learned to do good execution with it.

"It's too bad the regulations forbid our using the .38," commiserated Bull. "Otherwise you might be detailed to show the regiment something about quick shooting with the revolver."

Rollins missed the irony completely.

"Yep, I could show 'em a thing or two," he admitted without any false modesty.

"Well, anyway, your horse experience will come in handy," suggested Gramp Jackson seriously. "We all think we're pretty good, but we can always learn more."

"Yes, the old Nth is always willing to learn," agreed Bull Manners.

"Believe me I'll be glad to show 'em anything I know," stated Rollins generously.

Chairs were hunched up nearer. On every face was an expression of deep and guileless interest.

"Methods of treating horses vary in the Army and with cowpunchers," Gramp Jackson said. "I've always been curious to know, for example, how cowpunchers go about curing a horse from slobbering."

"Slobbering — slobbering? I don't know—I don't think we bother much with it. My old man runs eighty, ninety head. If one goat isn't up to scratch we throw a saddle on another."

"That sure is disappointing. I'd hoped to hear if our method is right. It cures it all right, but I was sort of hoping you had a better one."

"Maybe," conceded Rollins. "How do you go about it? Perhaps I'll remember once I hear."

"Our way is sort of clumsy, but it works sometimes."

"How is it? How do you cure a horse of slobbering?"

There was an almost oppressive silence in the dining room.

Gramp rolled and lighted another cigaret, taking a long pull at it before he answered. Then he said, his voice very mild—

"We most generally teach them to spit!"

In the silence that followed we rose and departed, all of us, leaving Rollins sitting there, puzzled.

THE NEXT day the Old Man, who had sized the boy up pretty well, assigned him to Captain Bullen's Troop B, in the first squadron. Captain Bullen had a tongue that cracked like a whip and was reputed the strictest disciplinarian in the regiment, although his men were crazy about him. But I knew that he had a deep and abiding hatred for all green second lieutenants raw from civil life, especially if they were commissioned through political influence as this kid was.

The first thing Dorsey Bullen did was to put Rollins in the ranks under a corporal to learn his drill. He didn't even know the "School of the Soldier," let alone anything about being an officer.

The next night at mess he seemed to have forgotten the grind we had pulled on him for he babbled away cheerfully, giving us his weighty opinion on Army horsemanship, not a flattering one by any means. To him the cowboy saddle and Western style of riding were the sum and total of horsemanship. The three of us at the mess who had been raised on Western ranches harked back to the days when we had held the same ideas. As it happened there probably was not an officer in that mess who did not possess at least one thoroughbred and a couple of polo ponies, not to mention a select assortment of silver cups gained at polo, steeplechasing and horse shows.

We were also the joint owners of a promising horse maintained in luxury at the Juarez track, who had already honored the regimental colors and enriched our scanty purses by placing in three races and showing in two others.

As he prattled on I thought of my mare, Golden Dawn, slim legged and quick as a cat. I thought of the months I had put in at patient work, suppling and balancing her, working her on two tracks, making her obey the aids, until now she was as responsive as a violin in the hands of a virtuoso. What a joy she was to ride—leaping smoothly into full gallop from the halt, shifting to right or left lead at the slightest pressure, moving in any direction with so little conscious control that it seemed as though she obeyed one's slightest thought, skimming over the jump like a bird and threading in and out of the squadron at full gallop with the effortless effect of a swallow coasting down the wind.

Thinking of her and listening to Rollins' chatter, I grew a little impatient and figured that it was about time some one sat on him hard for his soul's good.

After that first evening the mess gave him almost complete silence, which is far worse than being hazed—if he only had known it. He couldn't help noticing it after awhile, and he too grew silent at last. But glancing at him occasionally, I could see that he had not put the unsociability of the mess down to any fault of his, but had, on the contrary, figured us out as a

tight corporation of unfriendly snobs, high hat to newcomers.

Even Captain Bullen gave him up—told him to get the hell out of the orderly room and stay out—which was pretty bad, too. When a troop commander doesn't think his particular shavetail is worth rescuing as a brand from the burning, uncomfortable things are likely to happen to that particular shavetail.

I noticed him during a pause in squadron drill a day or two later and observed that he was carrying one of those fancy embossed revolver holsters, the kind sold by Chicago mail order houses, and instead of the blued steel .45 Colt automatic, he was carrying a nickle plated, pearl handled revolver, probably acquired from the same source. Evidently Captain Bullen hadn't been interested enough to notice it, or there would have been some sulphurous language in that vicinity.

Aside from the formal calls, cards laid on his trunk locker by the officers in the regiment, most of them dutifully placed there during his absence from his quarters, he must have realized that he was as welcome as a skunk at a lawn party. He mooned around by himself, saying little. I began to feel a little sorry for him and spoke to him once or twice. Thereafter he addressed me by my nickname, "Collie," and infested my quarters, giving me much unsought advice on how to break horses.

I could have stood the too easy familiarity of the nickname in spite of the fact that I was handling a troop when he was wearing safety pins instead of buttons, but the long winded dissertation on horses proved too boresome and I regretfully but firmly kicked him out.

The regimental hop occurred with unvarying frequency every Saturday night at the country club nearby. Some of us went to drink and dance, some of us went to dance, and some of us went to drink. I was doing a little of both, engaged in sliding around the floor to the tunes of the regimental band with an occasional visit to have a drink with the Old Guard which died every Saturday night but never surrendered—Gramp Jackson, Bull Manners, *et al.*—who invariably took up a position close to the base of supplies and refused to move therefrom until the last strains of "Army Blue" finished the evening.

In each of my visits to the Old Guard trenches I saw the same sight, young Rollins at the far end of the bar all alone, getting himself quietly and wholeheartedly plastered.

Back to the floor I went again, to do a couple of "duty" dances, one with the colonel's wife and one with a lanky sister-in-law of the doctor—the sort of visiting girl at an Army post whom the irreverent bachelors immediately dub an F. I. C. L., otherwise a Failure In Civil Life.

THE NTH HORSE put on a lot of dog at a regimental hop: the silken fringed battle standards, the national with its defiant eagle atop the staff, and the regimental golden yellow one gracing one end of the ball room while all the troop guidons, scarlet and white silk bannerets, were massed at the other.

Below the battle standards were placed the silver trophies won by the regiment. Two fine looking sergeants, their full dress uniforms bemedaled and sporting the yellow cavalry full dress cords, stood on guard with drawn sabers.

Just outside on the porch was the regimental band—all in full dress—and how those babies could play! When the evening was well advanced they invariably sounded off the quick and lively notes of "Blue Bonnets Over The Border" which was a signal for every one to cheer wildly as it was the regimental galloping song.

It was also a signal for the bachelor officers to send out large quantities of beer to the faithful musicians, and to relieve and refresh the color guard in the same manner, a duty taken very seriously by the bachelor officers aforesaid.

My dance with the F. I. C. L. ended at last and people applauded. The band leader started to raise his baton for an encore, but caught the dirty look I shot at him and blew his nose instead. Just as

I was telling the girl how disappointing it was not to have had an encore, I heard a shout from the direction of the bar, which opened off the ballroom through a corridor. The barroom door was quickly closed. I think I was the only one who noticed it. At any rate I moved by the right flank and entered the bar in line of columns at the gallop, sensing that something was astir and having a hunch as to what it was.

Well, it was. Our fair haired boy lieutenant was standing in the center of the barroom, waving his nickle plated revolver at the Old Guard and calling them every variety of name on the calendar.

"You think you're pretty hot—you blankety-blank supercilious snobs! Why my old man could buy and sell the lot of you!" he was saying. "With the pull he's got in Washington he could have you out in the streets looking for jobs inside of a week . . ." and so on, he went, waving that ridiculous toy revolver and piling insult upon insult.

On the other side of the bar opposite him stood Jim the bartender, his face expressionless. He caught my eye and glanced significantly down at a bung starter beside him, gazing longingly at Rollins. I shook my head. Alex Rock, out of the 3rd Squadron, was standing near the door with me. We looked at each other, nodded imperceptibly and moved quietly toward Rollins.

"Why, you dressed up bunch of nincompoops, any low life cowpuncher on my dad's ranch could outshoot you and outride you—those guys could clean up on the whole regiment without half trying!" He was drunk and nasty, his flat, nasal voice grating on the ear with an unpleasant, jarring note.

The group of officers watched him curiously, paying no attention to the revolver, but examining him in the detached and impersonal manner of a group of scientists studying a strange type of savage. This made him even madder and his voice rose viciously. Then he called them the unpardonable word . . .

Just as Bull Manners started for him, Alec and I grabbed Rollins and knocked the revolver out of his hand. Neither Alec nor I are exactly infants and he was helpless, although he kicked and squirmed.

"Come on," we said soothingly. "The bar is no place for this sort of stuff—let's go outside."

And by coercion and brute strength we somehow got him out the rear door, leaving the rest of the crowd inside the bar, all of them with the exception of Bull Manners, reflectively studying their glasses and seeming not the least perturbed.

We got him to the rear of the clubhouse and began to walk him toward our quarters. He nearly got away from us once and for a few seconds the three of us were rolling in the ditch—as messy looking a trio of officers and gentlemen as you ever saw. Somehow we got him home and into bed and snoring, and after cleaning up, we headed back for the club.

"What a complete hick!" commented Alec. "What do you suppose is next on the program for him?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I don't see anything but that he should be asked to resign or transfer from the regiment."

"Sure, that goes without saying—but how to get through his thick head what a complete asinine exhibition he's made of himself?"

We shook our heads. As a matter of fact we had more important matters to occupy our minds before the night was over.

We returned to the bachelor building at one or two o'clock in the morning. The telephone was jangling and ringing in nervous bursts. It was the adjutant calling. He told us that the First Squadron would move out early next day to patrol the Border. Orozco was staging a raid somewhere along the line and it was up to us to protect the ranches on the American side of the Rio Grande.

The adjutant gave me another piece of information. Seeing that Captain Bullen, by virtue of seniority, was squadron commander, Rollins, the fair haired Boy

Terror of the Western Plains, was wished on me—assigned to my troop for instruction and training.

"I'll instruct and train him!" I said grimly enough as I hung up the receiver.

I WAS commanding A at that time, as I've said, my skipper being away attending the Army School of the Line at Fort Leavenworth. Frankly, I was none too pleased at the prospect of having Rollins wished on me. Border service settles down to lone trooping, miles from nowhere, without any companionship except the other officer in the troop—and this wet nosed kid was far from being my idea of an interesting companion.

Sunday morning breakfast before stables at a cavalry mess is never a too cheerful affair. In the middle of it, in rambles this Rollins and makes an abject and rather sickening apology, trying to explain away his actions of the night before on the plea of drunkenness, the one excuse that doesn't go down with a hard boiled cavalry outfit, used to judging men in their cups. The unwritten law in the Nth was that a man must carry his liquor like a gentleman, or never drink.

Anyway, his apology was listened to in a strained and uncomfortable silence; no one said a word. Rollins turned a shade paler and sat down to his eggs and coffee as we rose to go to duty.

Golden Dawn was tethered to the hitching rack as I came out, and she threw up her head and whinnied at me as Murphy came downstairs with my field equipmen and saber. He snapped the French blade I always carried to the off cantle rings, slipped on cantle bags, pommel bags, slicker and canteen and strapped the whole works down tight and shipshape, Golden Dawn nosing him impatiently from time to time as though anxious to be off.

In the meantime I had strapped my pistol holster to my thigh, slipped the leather straps of field glasses and dispatch case under my saber belt so they couldn't flop about at the trot, felt for cigarets and matches, notebook and pencil, whistle and luminous compass, and clambered aboard while Murphy held the stirrup.

Just then Rollins came out, mounted the horse held for him by his striker and galloped away without waiting for the man to mount, which, of course, meant that the soldier had to climb up on the high packed saddle while his horse was dancing around madly trying to follow the other. I rode over and held the striker's horse while the man mounted. Golden Dawn danced and pirouetted around, making playful bites at my legs, sniffing the fresh morning air, exceedingly impatient to get going. Murphy was now mounted and followed as we rode toward the troop lines.

Sergeant Henderson had everything ready, troop lined up fully packed and equipped; nearly one hundred men and horses looking very fit and capable as they stood there at attention. Opening the ranks I went over them man by man and horse by horse, finding not a single thing needing attention. The wagons stood behind, all kits checked and ready.

I was busy examining the off front pastern of No. 38 horse, which seemed slightly swollen, when up rode Rollins, feet sticking out, elbows akimbo, and drew up his horse with a rattle and clatter where I stood on foot. I had to step lively to avoid being ridden on. After nearly knocking me down, the Boy Terror of the Western Plains continued to sit there in the saddle.

"The Old Man tells me I'm going out with your troop," he announced.

Sergeant Henderson gasped. The men around me grinned. I straightened up, looked at Sergeant Henderson and jerked my head toward the Boy Wonder. Henderson strode over and led the kid out of earshot, talking to him in a low tone. In a few seconds Rollins rode back and dismounted.

Turning out a ridiculous salute, he sounded off—

"Sir, Lieutenant Rollins reports for duty with Troop A by order of the regimental commander!"

It might have seemed a little martinet-like, but there wasn't a soldier in that troop who would have remained on his horse while reporting to a dismounted senior; and why should I let this kid lieutenant get away with it?

"See that Lieutenant Rollins is assigned an orderly," I said to Henderson, and glanced at my wrist watch. It was time to move out.

They moved like well oiled clockwork, that outfit; a blast on my whistle and every man grasped reins in right hand and placed left foot in stirrup. Another blast and they rose simultaneously and settled into the saddles. Giving them a minute to adjust packs, sabers, rifles and reins. I moved them out across the parade ground to where the squadron adjutant and sergeant-major faced each other on the line to be occupied by the squadron. My guidon sergeant snapped out of the troop, his scarlet and white pennant fluttering overhead, and galloped toward the line at the moment that three other guidons were borne rapidly toward the same point.

Down from headquarters rode the colonel and his adjutant, around the corner of the Post Exchange rode the band, the kettledrums on the white drum horse gleaming with polished brass in the morning sun.

In another few seconds four troops swung up into line to form the squadron. Captain Bullen faced the line and received the reports; a trumpet rang out. The colonel rode up. Captain Bullen barked a short command. There was a rasping, steely clang as four hundred sabers were drawn. Another bark and the officers' sabers flashed up; another and a glittering wall of steel rose above the squadron as the four hundred blades came up to the "present" and the guidons dipped.

The colonel saluted grumpily, sabers came back to the "carry," the trumpets of the band sounded off the traditional ruffle, and the band crashed into the haunting notes of "Zamboango" while the colonel galloped to the right flank, inspecting.

MY TROOP was on the right of the line and I rode over to meet him, saluting and falling in on his left as he rode around my lieutenant, Rollins sitting there looking like a poor imitation of Don Quixote de la Mancha, elbows akimbo, feet stuck out, chest caved in, shoulders drooping and hat stuck on the back of his head at a what-the-hell-do-I-care angle. It was a sad sight and I could see the Old Man beginning to steam up.

He turned to me, sparks flying from his harsh old blue eyes, his white mustaches sticking up like the whiskers of an excited tomcat.

"Mr. Stewart, Mr. Stewart! What is your second lieutenant looking at his feet for? Tell him, Mr. Stewart, that I don't want to steal his boots." The high pitched querulous notes of the Old Man's voice carried all over the squadron. "Have some sergeant teach him the position of the trooper at attention, Mr. Stewart . . . And look at his throat latch—look at it!" His voice hit a higher note. "Tight as a snake's skin! Does he want to choke his horse to death, Mr. Stewart? Disgraceful!"

The Old Man glared at me venomously. Then he rode on grumbling and growling so himself and inspected the rest of the troop.

Believe me, I was pretty sore. I'd gone over the troop with a hawk-like eye and there was nothing on which the colonel's critical glance should have rested. Of course I hadn't inspected Rollins—one expects an officer to look after himself—and I had received a calling down for it!

At that moment I would have traded Rollins for a hamstrung mule from a jackass battery, and thrown in something to boot. That's how much I thought of him. Sergeant Henderson looked like a thundercloud.

The colonel dispensed with the passing in review, returned Captain Bullen's salute; the band moved forward, their instruments sparkling, and prepared to play us off the post, an old custom in the Nth,

where they always did things with a little extra touch.

Sabers were returned with a clang all down the line of horses.

"On First Troop, right forward! Fours right—ye-e-e-ow!" came Bullen's voice, clear as a trumpet.

There was a flash of scarlet as the squadron standard and its guard galloped to place, the sudden trampling of hundreds of steel shod hoofs on the hard parade ground, and the squadron swung out into column of fours.

The band broke forth into the gay and inspiring notes of "Blue Bonnets Over The Border" and we headed for the gates of the fort, following the music.

The gate guard turned out with a rattle and clatter and presented arms, the band swung out of column playing for all they were worth as we went by—and we were on our way toward the city below us.

"Route order" was given in a few minutes and Rollins ranged up beside me.

"What's that funny tune the band is wheezing out?" he asked. "Why don't they play something with a kick in it?"

Now "Blue Bonnets Over The Border" has played the old Nth into battle in the Seminole Wars, in the Mexican War; in the Civil and Spanish Wars, and is very dear to the hearts of the regiment. It has a story behind it as well, for the regiment was originally organized as a regiment of dragoons. Its facings of orange-yellow were afterward adopted for all the cavalry regiments. The first colonel was a Scotsman—one of the "Wild Geese" or descendants of "Wild Geese" who scattered from their native heather to offer their swords abroad when politics and religion went wrong at home. And this old Scottish colonel had brought "Blue Bonnets Over The Border" to the regiment. And with the song there was another custom indulged in by the old-timers. The casual observer never noticed that an officer of the Nth would wave his whisky or cocktail over the nearest glass of water before drinking it, a silent toast that had come down through the years from the old days in Scotland when it was dangerous to mention the name of Bonnie Prince Charlie, in exile "over the water."

I tried to explain this to him as we rode along, but I could see that he thought it silly—and maybe it was. But men will persist in treasuring silly things that are handed down to them through the centuries; and that intangible thing called the soul of the regiment is made up of a lot of seemingly silly things.

"Look here, Stewart," he asked, neglecting the polite "mister", "what was the big idea of making me get down off my horse to talk to you this morning?"

I was silent for a moment.

"Mr. Rollins," I answered at last, choosing my words carefully, "in civil life you can get away with crude stuff: you can remain seated while you are talking with an older man or a woman standing; you can sit on your horse and talk to a woman or an older man standing on the ground; you can address an older man by his surname as one addresses a waiter or servant, omitting any title. You can do all those things and, in addition, pick your teeth in public, and no harm will be done except that you will be avoided by certain types of people all over the world. But when you are in Military or Naval service, or in the Merchant Marine, you can't show disrespect to your superior, because disrespect and discipline don't travel together. While I am your senior officer, my title is mister. Do you get me?"

He nodded, frowning in thought. We rode along silently for a time. At last he looked up, his eyes somber.

"I guess you think I'm pretty much of a roughneck, Mr. Stewart," he said; and then in a lower tone, half to himself, "And I guess I am at that."

Somehow he reminded me of a bewildered puppy after its first encounter with the family cat, and I felt a little pity for him. But pity wasn't what he needed at this stage of the game.

"It isn't sandpaper for your neck you need so much as a realization that you are in a new game and that it's up to you to keep your mouth shut and your ears

and eyes open until you learn it," I said brutally.

The field music of the squadron assembled in front of us and burst into tongue as we were called to attention to ride through town. Our trumpeters were the pride of the Nth Horse and they could do things with a trumpet never dreamed of by the makers. They had a tricky way of resting their instruments on their hips and bringing them up to the blowing position with a snappy outward twist that swung the yellow trumpet cords into a graceful circle as they broke into the inspiring strains of the field music.

THE HORSES knew we were on parade, for they marched very alertly, heads up, nostrils dilated, stepping high, wide and handsome. The sidewalks were lined with townspeople with whom the Nth got along famously and they clapped and cheered as we moved through the main street.

Glancing back at the troop as we rounded a corner, my eye registered some unusual movement in rear of me. Turning more in the saddle to investigate, I drew in my breath sharply and swore. For a second I saw red. Then I called Murphy up beside me.

"My compliments to Lieutenant Rollins and he will please turn over command of his platoon to his sergeant and fall in the rear of the troop," I said.

Murphy's eyes opened wide as he saluted, turned his horse on its haunches and dropped back. For Murphy knew what the order meant. It is like the adjutant rapping on an officer's door and asking him for his saber, or like a soldier being told to "get your blankets and come on."

It was drastic, but the circumstances warranted it, for the Boy Wonder of the Western Plains was waving his hand and smiling to people on the sidewalks—smiling and waving from the ranks of a cavalry regiment of the Regular Army. riding at attention! Smiling and waving from the ranks of the Nth Horse!

We rode on through the town and came out into the open mesa at last, through a welter of adobe Mexican shacks. The hike was really started. The squadron lengthened out into marching formation, column of twos. Looking back as we rode up a slight rise, I saw the whole outfit winding away behind me, a long column of sun and wind tanned men in olive drab and bronze, riding with that easy, alert sort of grace that is peculiarly the heritage of the cavalryman.

A cavalry outfit moving into the field is a beautiful sight to any one who knows its capabilities. It is business-like and efficient, able to move its rifles swiftly into battle, capable of striking hard blows at a long distance and of reforming and striking again and again.

The men laughed and sang behind us, the birds and jackrabbits scattered before us, raised up by the fringe of troop dogs, running in a semicircle thrown out in front of our advance.

After the first halt we started the trot—the steady, remorseless cavalry trot that eats up the miles hour after hour, the long columns winding along the mesa moving forward with a steady beat and cadence peculiarly its own—the musical cadence of clinking cups, sabers, curb chains and spurs, accompanied by the creak of saddle leather.

After an hour or two I began to feel that perhaps I had been a little severe with Rollins, and decided to end his punishment. I sent for him.

"Mr. Rollins, hereafter please remember that when men are required to ride at attention, heads to the front, that officers are required to set the example. You are released from arrest."

He looked at me in surprise.

"Why—was I in arrest?" he asked innocently.

Somehow, I felt at that moment that this fair haired hero of the West was going to succeed in getting badly on my nerves before the march was ended.

It was pretty hot in the Texas sun, and both men and horses began to feel it before long. I saw Rollins sitting slumped

in his saddle, looking pasty and all fagged out before we had made fifteen miles. Looking fagged out before his soldiers is one thing that an officer can't do, example being what it is and the leaders' influence being what it is supposed to be on the herd mind.

I landed on him pretty hard; told him that being a cavalry officer wasn't all waving at the girls, that he was supposed to be a leader and an example of strength and courage to his men. He straightened up in his saddle and, as I well knew, actually felt less tired himself. But had a lightning bolt cracked me wide open at that moment and scattered me all over the mesa, I'm quite sure Mr. Rollins would have borne the tragedy with surprising equanimity.

His eyes began to assume that injured expression of the man who feels that he is being unjustly picked on. I felt a little remorseful, then steeled myself with the reflection that after all he would have to be out alone on his own some day, entrusted with the lives of better men than he was and for their sakes he should be hazed until he knew something.

We made camp near a water tank along the railroad that night—making camp being a very pretty formation as done by the Nth. First the guidon sergeants would gallop forward, four spots of scarlet and white, and dismount. The squadron came up sedately behind them, the leading troop forming line, followed by the second, third and fourth troops, four lines of nearly a hundred men and horses each, every troop lining up on its own guidon. Then came a sharp command.

Single ranks opened out into double ranks; another command and every man hit the ground at the same instant, saddles were lined up, lariats joined into a temporary picket line, the horses tethered and men returned to their saddles. There was a second or two of flurry and then pup tents began to rise; in a few minutes the camp was made and ready, a compact square of khaki colored tents, rising up like magic without any fuss and feathers. Fires were started and not long after came the high pitched braying of the wagon mules who scented the camp from afar and knew that their day's work was nearly over.

WE WERE allowed a small A-tent for the officers of each troop and it was my dubious privilege to share it with Rollins, our two canvas cots stretched out against either wall, saddles and saddle bags at the foot, field glasses, pistols and dispatch cases hanging on the tent poles, collapsible canvas bucket and wash basin outside.

First off I told Rollins to secure himself a regulation pistol and holster from the supply sergeant and wear it hereafter. This went down hard and he obeyed a little sullenly, thinking it was just some more of my martinet stuff. It was. For after all an officer has to be an instructor of his men with the pistol, and to be a good instructor he must be able to use it. Rollins carried it with an exaggerated sort of limp that night at retreat, as though its weight were overwhelming.

"If you're too weak to carry that gun, you had better put in for transfer to the Army Nurse Corps, with the other ladies," I said to him.

He flushed and stopped his grandstand stuff like a shot.

Now we had an informal club system in the Nth at that time before prohibition, a system whereby each officer of the squadron provided the drinks for the crowd one night. It was my turn first and the officers assembled after water call and before supper to have an appetizer at my tent. Murphy was always an enthusiastic aid at these parties—filling glasses and pouring water with great willingness, and one eye cocked on the bottle—the last good drink in it belonging to him by unwritten law and custom of the service.

Rollins drank his drink and immediately unstoppered that infernal clacking tongue of his.

We all listened to him in silence for awhile. I could see that Captain Bullen was waiting for the opportunity to have an informal talk about the service ahead of us, but he couldn't get a word in edgewise.

It was Bull Manners who finally stopped the kid's flow of oratory.

Rollins had finished some particularly atrocious boast of his own prowess.

"I don't see," remarked Bull, "why the colonel sends out this whole expensive squadron to patrol the Border. It would save the taxpayer a lot of money if he just sent the Boy Terror of the Western Plains out on his own . . ." And he went on in this strain, finally ending up with some allusion to hound packs and hunting. "It's queer how the youngest puppy at the tail of the pack always does the most ki-yi-ing," he remarked.

Rollins got this and flushed, but it had the effect of silencing him for the time being.

And strangely enough, I felt a little irritated at the reproof. For Rollins was now my lieutenant and it upset me to have any one outside the troop take a crack at him.

Captain Bullen saw his opportunity now and began to outline to us the orders he had received from the regimental commander.

"Our main job, after protecting the Border from any raids by this fellow Orozco, is to see that he doesn't get any arms and ammunition through. He's got plenty of horses and men, but blame few guns and cartridges. And he's desperate to get them. You'll have to watch like hawks. And we've got to hurry now that we've got men and horses shaken down; we'll increase the marching rate tomorrow, and the length of march.

"Stewart, you'll drop off tomorrow with your troop, taking post at Chico's ranch. Yours will be the toughest spot as Orozco's headquarters will be only six miles away across the Rio Grande . . ."

I felt a little flush of pride that my troop was picked to guard the hottest spot, and swore to myself that they wouldn't get a needle through my territory. I had forgotten to figure on the Boy Terror of the Plains! Captain Bullen went on, giving each troop its orders in turn and we all made notes and asked questions. This lasted until supper time.

The officers' mess kits were brought up from each troop and we all had supper together, relaxing afterward around a camp-fire, for the nights are chilly on the high plateau of the Southwest. Rollins still preserved his silence, although we talked and laughed and sang while a cheerful hum came up from the troop tents. I think the kid felt his loneliness that night, and again I felt myself beginning to be sorry for him. But no good was to be gained that way and I steeled myself against showing him any kindness until he got his values straightened out.

A strong camp guard was established that night, with an officer-of-the-day and an officer-of-the-guard, which latter detail Rollins drew down, being junior and first for duty.

A well guarded camp was an old Roman military tradition thoroughly believed in by the Nth. Had it been the Nth down at Columbus, New Mexico, Pancho Villa would never have ridden roughshod over an entire regiment at dead of night and escaped unscathed.

But Rollins couldn't see it. He growled about his officer-of-the-guard detail.

"My God, stay up all night and prowl around just because it was done that way in the Revolutionary War! Why, Stewart —Mr. Stewart—we're forty miles from the Border and from the Mexicans!"

"Yes?" I said as I arranged my blankets. "Maybè so. All the same if you don't want to land into the hottest water you ever landed in, don't monkey with guard duty. This is an army you're in, not a public debating society. When that fact begins to impress itself upon you, you'll begin to be of almost as much value to the troop as one of the dumbest recruit buck privates in the outfit." And with that I turned in.

Before I went to sleep I thought of

the weary days and nights I would have to suffer the conversation of this insufferable pest, and I cursed out the colonel for wishing him on me. But, after all, he was my lieutenant, and I registered a mental vow to make a soldier out of him or break him before I got through.

I couldn't have slept more than three or four hours when I heard some disturbance and woke up. I got up and buckled on my pistol belt.

The camp was boiling in silent movement. Hurrying out, I found Sergeant Henderson standing before the troop assembly point with the men flitting out of their tents with belts and rifles, quickly falling in. Low toned voices called down through the rank as the troopers counted fours. In the darkness I could hear the other troops forming up as rapidly.

"What's up?" I asked Hendeson.

"Troop present and accounted for, sir!" he reported. "Don't know, sir. Some one says turn out—there's a Mexican outfit near the camp."

A crisp order came out of the darkness near me in Captain Bullen's voice.

In obedience to it I gave "Fours left, double time," and swung the outfit along the east flank of the camp, put them into line, commanded them to load and lock pieces—and waited.

Again Captain Bullen's voice came out of the darkness, telling me to take a patrol and go with the officer of the guard to reconnoiter.

Rollins came up. I called out three men and followed along with him. He was very excited and stumbled along, his pistol out, leading down toward where I remembered seeing a clump of cottonwood trees before dark.

Slowing up, we went forward more cautiously, Rollins and I in the lead. Then I heard something stirring in the cottonwoods and listened a moment, leaning forward.

I straightened up and swore.

"You've ruined the night's rest of a whole squadron of cavalry on account of one wandering burro!" I said scornfully.

Rollins looked at me piteously.

"My God, I'll never live that down!" he answered.

It was true; the whole regiment would learn of it; his life would be unbearable. I did some quick thinking. After all, he was my lieutenant, and my job was not to let him ruin himself utterly. The men were several paces in rear of us. Telling them to remain where they were, I pulled Rollins ahead.

"Fire in the air a couple of times and yell," I said.

He did as I directed, and it sounded like a battle. The burro leaped out and crashed away through the brush.

Returning, I found my troop moving forward at the double, the rest of the squadron behind it. Stopping them, I reported to Captain Bullen that we had driven off a prowler—which was true—and that everything was now quiet.

Rollins stuttered his thanks to me, but I growled at him and turned in.

We moved out early in the morning; a trained eye could already see the squadron settling into its stride after the first day on the field—sort of shaking down and hardening its fiber.

The halt that night was nearer the river and we camped close to Chico's ranch-house. It was our last night with the squadron, as my troop was to take station here while the others went on to more distant posts.

The ranch people—an old man and his two sons—had been very worried about Orozco, fearful that he would send raiding parties through as this place was only six or seven miles from the river, where, on the opposite bank, his forces were supposed to be concentrating. The Old Man told us that a small party of Red Flaggers, as Orozco's forces were called, had ridden through only the day before.

When Rollins heard this he was scornful. He had, it seemed, all the contempt that a certain type of Southwesterner has for the Mexican—a contempt very much undeserved, as the Mexican is a brave fighter; even the bandit type which infests the Border is a hardy and courageous

individual. But there was no arguing with this half baked kid—he knew it all and more.

OF COURSE none of us knew that Orozco's patrol was right up behind us on the hillside, watching every move we made, ready to send back word the second they saw a favorable opportunity to attack.

The squadron moved on next day, leaving my troop to make permanent camp. The small pup tents sheltering two men each were replaced with the larger tents holding a squad; canvas cots were issued and arm racks for the rifles.

It was a good camp, well shaded by cottonwood trees, its only disadvantage being that we had to water the horses at a stream over three-quarters of a mile away.

We had just finished rifle practise before going into the field and still had our pistol qualification course to finish. This I started immediately, commencing with the bull's-eye targets, dismounted, then working to the disappearing silhouettes. Rollins, of course, had to go through this like any recruit, and his ventures with the automatic pistol were pretty sad. He flinched at each shot and peppered the atmosphere everywhere except in the place where the target stood.

"It's this blame old cannon; nobody can shoot it," he averred.

"Yes?" I answered. "I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll shoot you the whole instruction course with your nickel plated toy and with the automatic, and beat you at both!"

"Done!" he growled, and we went forth.

Well, it was a little surprising. He outshot me dismounted on the bull's-eye target with the revolver. I had to work like a Trojan to beat him at the mounted course, where I finally pulled away from him entirely at the gallop.

But when it came to shooting with the automatic pistol he just wasn't there. I shot rings around him. I had kept my word and beaten him with both weapons.

"Well," he admitted grudgingly at last, "you're a pretty fine shot. But I'll bet you nobody else in the regiment could do it."

"That's where you're all wrong," I retorted. "Any lieutenant in the regiment can do it, and about a third of the soldiers."

"Then I'm not so good as I thought I was," he admitted. I agreed with him.

"But when it comes to riding I can put it all over you or anybody else in the outfit," he came back.

You had to hand it to that bird. If belief in his own invincibility makes the great man, this kid certainly contained within himself the seeds of success. I patiently tried to explain the difference between riding and horsemanship. Did you ever try to explain the beauties of a Beethoven symphony to a man who thinks "Alexander's Rag Time Band" is the finest piece ever composed? It was just about as hopeless as that. I got sick of it at last and decided to demonstrate to him that he wasn't so wonderful.

At Chico's ranch they had a few horses, among which was a white eyed, mean looking bronc. The old rancher willingly brought it forth, for a private seance in his rear corral.

The bronc was snubbed against the corral fence. Rollins found a Western saddle, threw it on and mounted. That bronc carried him out to the center of the corral on the first leap. I must say the kid could ride. The brute reared and plunged and rocketed about stiff legged and Rollins sat him with an easy grace, slapping the flanks of the bucking animal with his hat and emitting an occasional high pitched yell. It lasted about five minutes. It was good. I was satisfied and the horse was roped and again snubbed to the fence.

Rollins swaggered toward me, hands on hips, very pleased with himself.

"How about that?" he asked.

"Good as far as it goes," I admitted.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this—" and I pointed down to my Saumur flat saddle, an inconspicuous looking postage stamp affair compared to the great heavy Western saddle with its high cantle and pommel and its bucking

rolls holding the rider in. "Can you ride that broncho with this?"

He laughed and shook his head.

"Nobody can ride a bucking horse with a thing like that," he stated.

"You mean you wouldn't try?" I asked as I loosened the cinch of the Western saddle and flung it off, replacing it with the flat saddle.

He didn't reply, but watched me curiously as I swung on to the horse's back.

In another second there was a rush of air in my face as the broncho leaped straight out away from the fence. I settled deeply down into the saddle, gripping with calf and thigh for all I was worth, my legs clamped like iron and my waist and shoulders bending like rubber to the horse's wild leaps and stiff legged jumps. Then he started a sort of corkscrew motion as he landed, jarring every bone in my body again and again, but he couldn't shake me loose, long legged as I am. After five minutes I worked him back toward the fence. He was caught up and I dismounted.

"Want to try it?" I panted.

I'll give the kid credit. He didn't bat an eye, but swung right up. I knew instantly what would happen—I could see daylight between his knees and the saddle on the first leap of the cayuse. On the second leap Rollins was high out of the saddle, and on the third he flew clear and rolled several yards away, jumping to his feet again. He came toward me ruefully, brushing the dirt off his uniform and shaking his head.

HE STUDIED the horse and the flat saddle. I could see a resolution forming itself, and inwardly rejoiced. There must be some good in a pup who could take a licking and own up to it handsomely.

Thereafter he listened when I talked horsemanship, and he spent every spare minute shooting with the pistol. I found him after hours one day going out to practise, his face very grim.

"Why don't you take out some of those *other* rotten pistol shots of the troop," I suggested, "and let them have some practise as well?"

This suited him and he began to work with the backward men. It was a good way to bring up the average of the troop shooting. Then we progressed to the mounted pistol course—flashing by five silhouettes at the gallop and firing at them as the horse swept by. It takes good shooting to hit anything from a horse's back at a gallop. So poor was Rollin's showing that his face grew grim again. Then I taught him the trick of shooting as the horse hit the bottom of his stride, and pulling his trigger as the gun swept into the left edge of the target. He began to make a few hits and grew wild with enthusiasm.

Now the ammunition allowance per soldier and officer is limited to just enough to qualify an ordinarily good shot. Rollins, learning of this, asked if he might buy extra ammunition from the Ordnance for the troop. This was beginning to look hopeful, and I agreed. As a consequence, the shooting picked up wonderfully and when qualification course was held we made nearly three times the average number of Pistol Experts. Rollins himself only made Pistol Marksman, but I could see that the kid had taken a new lease on life because of his improvement. The only trouble was that he was in danger of becoming a pistol crank, believing in no other weapon.

When he became a little fulsome about his prowess with the pistol, I reminded him that he still had to qualify as a rifleman, a swordsman and a horseman.

He snorted at this but forbore any remark. I went on a scouting trip one day riding my second mount and leaving Golden Dawn in the picket line.

I returned about dusk and, riding up to the camp, saw a group of men watching something on our exercise ground. Following their glances I looked, then made a break for the place, as mad as I have ever been in my life.

For there in the middle of the exercise ground was Rollins mounted on Golden Dawn—jabbing her with the spurs and

jerking at her velvety mouth with the reins. Golden Dawn, who had never known such treatment, was fighting him, her eyes wild and her flanks heaving. I shouted at him, but he didn't hear me. As I ran toward him Golden Dawn decided that she had stood enough of this sort of treatment. Suddenly she reared and plunged, and went rocketing across the field like an outlaw. The first rear unseated Rollins and he clutched leather madly. The second leap shook him still more and about halfway across the field he tumbled out of the saddle and rolled on the ground.

Golden Dawn came running toward the picket line, whickering with indignation. I stopped her and began to soothe her. She nuzzled me with her velvety nose and stamped around, looking back occasionally at Rollins who had picked himself up and was coming toward us. I turned her over to my striker and met him halfway.

What I said to him I don't know. Evidently it was the first time in his life that he had been subjected to a thorough dressing down, and his eyes opened wide and he turned pale as I went on, telling him just how many kinds of an impossible cad he was to take another officer's horse without permission, telling him just what a clumsy handed, bragging nonentity he was, generally giving him a tongue lashing that he would never forget.

He was white faced and shaking when I got through. Thereafter I didn't speak to him except officially for three days. By the time I recognized him again he had grown quite humble and apologetic. But he had learned that horses weren't common property, and had also re-learned the fact that he was no horseman, and set about correcting that deficiency.

I maintained a strict guard system, two men on picket line guard and two on camp guard. It was my custom to rise any time after midnight and before dawn and inspect the camp. I could see that he thought this another evidence of pedantic queerness; but without a word from me he began to do the same thing, and we inspected alternate nights thereafter. Guard duty was one thing he couldn't grasp, despising the Mexican as he did; he didn't think they were worth losing sleep over.

Rumors about Orozco and his raids were flying up and down the Border. The old man at the ranch warned me once or twice that a raid was due, but we were always ready and I took the situation calmly—simply designating an assembly point for the troop in case of a night attack, and watching the roads and fords.

WORD came one day from Captain Bullen directing me to report to squadron headquarters for a conference of troop commanders. I wasn't so keen on leaving that untried kid in command, but I figured I could get back late that night, and took the chance.

Warning him to keep his eyes open and maintain a careful guard at all times, I mounted Golden Dawn, and Murphy and I set off to cover the twelve miles to squadron headquarters.

It was about noon when I arrived—just in time for chow. Bull Manners was there and Gramp Jackson and the others, and we foregathered joyfully. With great pride they showed me a galvanized iron wash tub filled with lumps of ice and water in which rested many dark bottles of beer, cool stuff which cut the alkali. After getting two bottles of it down to Murphy I returned and listened to the news and Border gossip.

"How's the Boy Terror of the Western Plains?" asked Bull Manners, and they all stopped drinking their beer to listen.

"He's learning," I answered warily.

A grunt of disbelief went up.

"He'd better learn while the learning is good," said Bull. "He's not due to last very long in this outfit."

"What do you mean?" I shot back.

"Hell, after the stunt he pulled at the club, do you suppose we're going to stand for that pup in this outfit? Not on your tin type, Collie. It's up to him whether he wants to resign or transfer, but it'll have to be one or the other."

Every one nodded. I could see that

Rollins had signally failed to win himself a niche in the affections of the Nth, and that they had decided on a course of action in my absence.

"Is that so?" I asked sarcastically. "I suppose all of you paragons of perfection were born capable cavalry officers?"

In a second the whole gang had turned on me, all talking at once, telling me of various bonehead plays he had pulled, many of which I heard for the first time.

Bull Manner's voice rose above the rest and drowned them out.

"Twice he was late for formations in Bullen's troop—and did he report himself? He did not!" Bull was emphatic.

That wasn't so good. It was a point of honor for an officer to report himself for any dereliction of duty. I shook my head over this. It was the first time I'd heard of it. I had mentioned that custom of the service to him only last week. I remembered that he had looked a little queer. But after all, he was my lieutenant and I fought back.

"Good old Collie's maternal instincts are aroused," said Gramp placatingly when the battle waxed most fiercely.

Some one announced that chow was ready and we broke off as we moved toward the mess shack and the waiting meal. I was a little heavy hearted for I saw all too plainly that the officers of the Nth were down on Rollins, and were bitterly intent on getting rid of him.

But that particular waiting meal was destined never to be eaten. I heard a shout from the other end of the camp and the rattle of hoofs of a horse at the gallop. Captain Bullen came to his tent door and stood by the squadron standard which flaunted itself outside his tent. Up the troop street galloped a soldier; I recognized the horse before I did the man. It was that jug headed skate, No. 46, and he certainly had been pushed, for his flanks were heaving and he was drenched with sweat. Farnsworth, a man out of the Third Platoon, was riding him, and as soon as I saw Farnsworth's face I knew something had happened to my troop.

Anxiously I waited until the trooper drew up before me and leaped to the ground.

"Sir, Orozco's whole outfit has jumped the camp and stolen all the rifles and ammunition! Lieutenant Rollins is pursuing them toward the river with the hull troop!"

Captain Bullen was standing beside me. He didn't bat an eye but turned to Bull Manners, the squadron adjutant.

"B and C Troops to move out immediately, leaving guard detachment of ten men each. Word to D Troop to follow up. To horse, gentlemen!"

The camp woke to sudden life. I could see Murphy hurriedly putting the saddle on Golden Dawn.

"Captain Bullen," I said. "May I join my troop?"

"Go on!" He nodded and I flew to my horse; and Murphy and I were on our way in a few seconds, Farnsworth accompanying us on a fresh horse.

He was too excited to tell much about the riot and I rode ahead grimly, pushing Golden Dawn for all she was worth. I thought the twelve miles would never come to an end, but at last we came in sight of Chico's ranch and the camp.

Some strange silence and lifelessness about the camp warned me as I approached. There was not a horse in the picket line, or a man to be seen. The tents stood there—deserted.

RIDING in past the ranch, I heard a shout, and the old gray bearded rancher came running toward me. Waiting for him to come up, I looked over the camp. The place was trodden by many hoofs; the field range in the kitchen was overturned, the guidon was gone from its position by my tent, trunk lockers were scattered around the troop street—the whole place looked as though it had been looted.

The graybeard came up.

"Looka here, Mr. Officer. That theah young officer done gone away from heah ridin' hard after some Greasers. Seems he took the hull army o' soldiers down to watah the horses. While he was gone

about two hundred o' Orozco's men come ridin' in—they grabs everything they can lay hands on, includin' all the rifles, and skeedaddles outa heah, takin' the two army wagons and mules with 'em. The young officer comes back and goes after them!" and he pointed toward the river.

"What time did this happen?" I asked as calmly as I could.

" 'Bout two hours ago!"

I turned to Farnsworth, telling him to remain behind to direct the squadron which I figured could not be very far behind me.

"All right. Murphy, let's go!" I said, and set Golden Dawn into a gallop.

She'd made twenty-four miles that day, but she seemed to feel that a lot depended upon her and settled tirelessly into her easy floating stride as we followed up the broad trail made by the troop horses.

On we went, following the road as it led in and out of cactus growth interspersed with outcroppings of rock. I tried to picture what had happened as the road flowed beneath Golden Dawn's steady stride.

Evidently Rollins had taken the entire troop to water, leaving no guard in camp. The men always wore their pistols to water, which meant that at least they were armed to that extent. But the rifles were gone, and the rifle, after all, is the cavalryman's chief weapon. Not only was the present situation bad, but it was liable to grow much worse. Should the Red Flaggers turn at bay there would be slaughter, for they could hold off the pursuing cavalry with rifle fire—shooting them to pieces before the troop could get close enough to use the pistol.

We must have traveled nearly halfway to the river when we came over a hill crest and saw the valley stretching away to the Rio Grande before us.

About two-thirds of the distance to the river, rising from higher ground, was a heavy cloud of dust out of which I could catch an occasional flash of sun on metal and see the outlines of tall sombreros. Look as I might, I could see no sign of the troop. Whether they had all been killed or captured I knew not, and I feared the worst.

Hurrying down the rise, we hit level going, and galloped along, watching the cloud of dust ahead; then we dipped into a hollow and I lost sight of it for a space.

As Golden Dawn galloped up the other side I began to check her. The nose of Murphy's horse was level with Golden Dawn's tail. Anxious to see how his mount was standing the grueling pace, I glanced backward. As I looked I saw puffs of dust spring in a line on the trail behind him. It was exactly as though some one had thrown a handful of pebbles at a dry earthbank. Again the line of dust puffs rose up, this time nearer.

Then on my ears fell the unmistakable chatter of a machine gun, coming somewhere from the right rear, down the draw through which we had just ridden. The only protection against it was to be found on the far side of the hill crest just before us. Waving to Murphy, I closed my spurs in on Golden Dawn. She fairly leaped at the hill crest and we slid down the other side, not a second too soon. As I checked her in her downward progress, Murphy and I looked back in time to see the line of dust puffs graze the hill crest, and to hear bullets singing overhead.

In front of us the dust cloud had resolved itself into a large band of mounted Mexicans. They must have seen us at the same instant, for I heard the faint reports of several guns, and saw men hurriedly dismounting to fire. In about two seconds this place was going to be too hot for safety. We couldn't go back and we couldn't go forward. Glancing about for shelter, I spied a small, dry arroyo cutting the surface of the hill off to the right. We rode for this as the bullets began to sing around us.

Its high banks afforded some measure of protection and Golden Dawn and Murphy's horse slid down into it on their haunches. Once arrived at the bottom, I dismounted, throwing the reins to Murphy, and crawled up to the top of the nearest side. Bullets were whirring about

the place like angry bees, but I worked my way up toward the hill crest above, over on the other side of which was that devilish machine gun.

SUDDENLY I paused and a cold chill ran through me. The squadron was following closely behind! They would gallop down into that draw, all unconscious of the danger, and when they were fully in view that machine gun would plow into them, tearing men and horses to pieces. It was a trap skilfully set.

With my heart going like a trip hammer, I pushed my way up the sides of the arroyo, working toward the hill crest. I must have been in plain view for a moment to the Mexican force in the valley toward the river, for a perfect swarm of bullets smacked and thudded on the rocks around me. Crouching low, I continued my progress.

Inch by inch I worked toward the hill crest, filled with fear for the safety of the squadron. At last I drew up directly below the top, getting some sort of protection toward the rear by intervening outcropping rocks which saved me as long as I remained prone. But I had to get up where I could warn the squadron before it galloped down into that treacherous valley on the far side.

Drawing a deep breath, I rushed forward, throwing myself down just as I reached the top. A perfect storm of bullets hammered the rocks around me. I could see the valley now. My eyes followed up the trail we had come—it ran across the small valley to the far side and disappeared over the knoll. Behind the knoll I could see a faint cloud of dust rising in the heat waves of the afternoon. The squadron was almost to the valley.

Staring up to the left, I sought for the machine gun, and my eyes lighted on it almost instantly. It stood in plain view from where I crouched—a squat, ugly affair on a tripod mount with four or five boxes of ammunition open behind it, a belt of ammunition in its breech and several Mexicans crouched around it; one of them sat with his hands on the firing mechanism.

The bullets still whined around me. Very quickly I made up my plan of action. I would wait until the advance troopers of the squadron rode over the crest on the opposite side of the draw, not over five hundred yards away, then rise and signal them from the hilltop, taking a chance with the Mexican's fire. Crouching, tense, with my heart hammering and my breath coming in nervous gasps, I waited, staring at the point of the trail where it disappeared over the opposite hill.

Then I noticed a sudden cessation of the fire from behind and glanced over my shoulder to see what it was all about. I caught my breath sharply at what I saw.

For there in the plain below me, not four hundred yards from the Mexican force, was my own troop issuing from a cleft in the hills.

As rapidly as they entered the plain they galloped out into a long line of foragers and began to move forward, slowly at first, then faster and faster until they were galloping full tilt at the enemy—a wave of horsemen attacking twice their number!

It was too far to make out individual men, but I could not see Rollins' horse with its three white stockings and its blaze face. The line swept onward. God, how I wished I were with them! But my job was to save the squadron if it was humanly possible. There was no time to mount up now and gallop to meet them. It was a case of staying right where I was and warning them by signal, keeping myself concealed from the machine gun crew until the last possible second.

Still, there was no sign of the approaching squadron—only that cloud of dust hanging above the road to the rear. The machine gun waited, its crew grim and silent, hands on firing mechanism ready to unloose a hail of death when the unsuspecting cavalry was completely in its field of fire.

The distant crack of pistols began to reach my ears. Turning to glimpse the

scene below, I saw the line of foragers almost upon the Red Flagger force, when suddenly I heard a whistle blast and saw every trooper turn his horse to the left, forming a column of troopers—a long, flexible formation that began to circle the Mexicans like a whip lash.

As the tail of it snapped forward I could see that the pistols were doing execution, dropping men and horses among the enemy. The Red Flaggers seemed to be bewildered, and fired only desultory, wild shots at the rapidly moving target. The troop galloped steadily around their flanks, the men, fresh from weeks of pistol practise, firing as calmly as though they were shooting at cardboard silhouette targets instead of living flesh.

From them I glanced back at the valley with its silent machine gun crew. There was no sign of the squadron, yet I did not dare leave my post, as they might appear any second. Glancing to the rear again, my eye picked up another movement far to the left and rear of the Mexican force, and I made it out as the two troop wagons. My heart sank at this sight, for there went all our rifles and ammunition toward Mexico. I craned forward, anxiously studying the distance they still had to go before they reached the Rio Grande and were out of our clutches on the far side. They only had about two miles to make—and mules travel fast!

The troop was still circling the Mexican flank, drawing steadily toward its rear, the continuous crack of the pistols sounding like corn popping at this distance. Far ahead the wagons rolled along.

Then like a flash of lightning it came over me what the troop was after; they were after those wagons and their rifles and ammunition. The Mexican force must have seen it at the same instant, for I saw a sudden flurry among them and a large mounted group began to detach itself and parallel the troop as it moved in the direction of the wagons. The pressure was a little relieved on the remaining group, and they announced this fact by resuming their fire on my position. Bullets began to thud and smack around me again, and I crouched down like a man trying to avoid a burst of rain.

BUT THERE was no time for crouching. My anxious eye spied a black spot on the opposite side of the valley from whence the squadron was coming, and a trooper began to top the rise. I could make out the pink blur of his face behind his horse's ears as he rose up steadily, coming on at a trot. Behind him, other men appeared, then I saw the flash of the squadron standard. The whole outfit must be jammed up on the advance guard, I reasoned, and moved forward, ready to spring to my feet and wave them back. Giving a last glance at the machine gun, I saw that its crew were aware of the squadron and were ready to unloose their infernal clatter as quickly as the troopers were fully exposed.

Now the leading troopers of the point were in plain view, riding down the slope. Behind them came the advance party—squad—and behind them I could see the solid mass of the squadron beginning to roll over the hill crest.

It was time to warn them.

I rose to my feet, leaping to the top of the hill. The firing had died down behind me but I expected it to start afresh at any second. Just as I appeared in full view the machine gunners saw me and pointed excitedly in my direction. The stubborn firer shook his head and continued to train his gun on the larger target—which proved him not so dumb at that.

I flung up my arms and semaphored to the leading units of the squadron. No one seemed to see me. It must be my background, I thought, and went below the crest, signaling again. Still there was no response; every one in the squadron was riding to the distant sound of firing to the front. I tried shouting, but the wind was against me.

Now nearly the whole of the leading troop was in plain view of the machine

gunners. I saw the guidon of the second troop mounting the crest of the opposite hill. I waved and shouted again, my heart sick with dread, my ears strained to catch the first premonitory rattle of the machine gun as it swept down living flesh and blood with its leaden hail.

Glancing in despair at the machine gunner, I saw him settle into his position and unlock a lever. Now it was coming!

I gave one last shout and glanced helplessly at the machine gun. Now the gunner was looking along his sight and swinging the barrel back and forth to test it. An officer stood above him, his hand raised. The gunner now watched this man's hand.

I watched in dread fascination for that hand to descend. Nearly the entire two troops were in plain view now. The leader nodded. His hand began to drop; I held my breath . . .

Suddenly I saw the machine gunner look up, startled. His glance was followed by the others. The crouching men rose, tugging at their revolvers. There was a shout on the hillside above them.

Down at full gallop came a blaze faced sorrel with three white stockings. In the saddle was Rollins, twirling something about his head. The horse came down that hillside like a bat out of hell, scattering fire as it struck the rocks, slipping and sliding and leaping, but coming on like a bullet straight at the gun crew.

Frightened at this four footed apparition about to land among them, the Mexicans drew back. Rollin's horse leaped among them. There was a whirl and something coiled through the air.

The machine gun suddenly toppled over on its base and began rapidly to bound and slide along behind the lone horseman. The Mexican gun crew fired after the despoiler of their weapon, but they were too late; he was rapidly galloping toward the squadron, the blued steel gun leaping and bounding along behind him like some live thing.

I found myself shaking like a leaf and ran back down the hillside to Murphy. A hasty glance at the plain below showed the main group of Mexicans still standing fast while the detached body was hurrying toward the river to protect the wagons and their precious freight from Troop A. I saw the golden sorrels of the troop nearing the wagons, and the wagons nearing the river.

I threw myself into the saddle. Our horses scrambled up the walls of the arroyo and teetered precariously a second on the edge above. We drove them on. Just at that second I saw a horseman flash over the hill above me and speed down the slope recklessly. It was the blaze faced horse with the three white stockings.

After him, like a torrent, poured the river of men of the squadron, rolling resistlessly down the slope. Once at the bottom they formed rapidly. I galloped on their flank as sabers flashed out and the squadron swept forward like a steel set wall.

The main group of Mexicans saw the wave of horsemen rolling at them and broke, scattering in all directions. That was a wild ride. I can feel the wind rushing in my face to this day, with Golden Dawn stretched out under me and the swift earth flashing past, and a sea of waving manes and gleaming bits and glittering steel on my left as the squadron thundered forward.

Ahead of us the white stockinged sorrel scattered pebbles behind him. Still farther ahead a confused group milled about the two wagons. The white stockinged sorrel disappeared in the welter of men and horses.

WHEN we arrived the fight was over. I saw Rollins shoot a Mexican driver out of one of the wagons; willing hands seized the frightened mules. The main group of Red Flaggers were flying toward the river.

Captain Bullen shouted an order. There was a sudden halt and the thump and creak of men dismounting. One or two rifles began to speak; more and more

took up the burden until the front of the squadron was outlined by a steady crackling as the dismounted men sent storms of lead after the fleeing Mexicans, who were getting out of range as rapidly as their horses could carry them.

A trumpet sounded "cease firing". Sergeant Henderson rode up and reported the troop present and accounted for, with three men slightly wounded and one horse gone, and all arms and ammunition recovered. He went away and soberly began to reorganize the troop, designating drivers for the wagons and horse holders for the led animals.

The officers of the squadron assembled. Rollins came up as I stood there talking to Bull Manners and Gramp. I looked at the youngster curiously as he approached. A silence fell on the group.

He came to a full stop in front of me and drew himself up, saluting.

"I have to report myself, sir, for disobedience of orders in leaving the camp unguarded during your absence," he announced, and stood there silent, his face white.

Manners and Gramp tactfully withdrew out of earshot.

"Do you suppose it will be a lesson to you to obey orders hereafter?" I asked. "Or will it be necessary to try you by court-martial to impress it on you?"

"I deserve a court-martial," he answered without a tremor.

He stood there straight and silent. I gazed at him a moment searchingly. Suddenly I put my hand on his shoulder.

"We'll try to get along without the court-martial, kid," I said, and looked away so as not to see his eyes, which had suddenly filled with tears.

Strolling back to where the others stood, Captain Bullen stopped me.

"What happened?" he asked.

Briefly I told him—told him everything, almost. He nodded after I'd finished.

"Pretty gritty stunt roping that machine gun," he commented. "He ought to be commended for that."

I shook my head. Bullen looked at me a second, then nodded understandingly.

"He's your pup," he said. "You train him." And he walked away. Bull Manners spoke up—

"What's going to happen to the Boy Wonder of the Western Plains?" he asked.

"Nothing is going to happen," I said dryly, "except that in the future, as in the past, he'll get all the objection and reproof he needs from his own troop commander." And then in a low voice I told him about the roping of the machine gun, a maneuver they had not seen or, if they had, had not understood. They said nothing, only nodded. Bull Manners reached into his saddle pockets and drew forth a silver flask. He unscrewed the small cup from its cover. Gramp Jackson took the cup.

The two of them marched solemnly over to where Rollins stared off into the distance. Gramp held the cup while Bull poured the whisky.

"Kid, how about a little drink?" they asked him.

ANOTHER MAN'S MONEY

A Night Ride on a Hobo Special

By BARRY SCOBEE

AFTER the closing hour Nate Dawson came from a side door of the bank with eighteen thousand dollars cash in his battered old telescope bag. It was pay for some of Old Man Copperage's cattle that Nate had sold, and it was in cash because the eccentric Copperage always demanded money on the barrel-head in his deals.

"You've got to step along if you make that train," the cashier warned.

"I'll step!" said Nate grimly. "I've got to catch that train."

He scanned the street as the cashier closed the door. Not a soul was in sight to see him and suspect about the money. Nor was there a car to give him a lift to the station. A cold March gale had blown people indoors. Nate began to pound the sidewalk, his big range hat flopping in the wind and his spurs jingling.

He had gone two blocks when he heard a locomotive bell ringing. He began to run. Another block brought him to a corner near the tracks, just in time to see the west bound limited pulling out. He ran on from sheer momentum. But the race was futile. In a moment the train was edging over the downgrade and out of the village. He stopped, panting.

"My luck!" he muttered. "Now the old man will be telegraphin'. He'll have me pinched."

Nate had worked for Cash Copperage six months. He had been the old man's son-in-law one month, and Copperage despised him. Throughout that month he had alternately ignored Nate and heaped abuse on him. And Nate had taken it because of Milda. He would have pulled out with his bride, but she, hoping for reconciliation, had pleaded with him to stay.

Then a different hand from Cash Copperage's had intervened in the situation. The hand of merciless Nature that knows no favorites. Short grass and a frigid and droughty winter had got the cattle business into a mean condition.

He gathered a trainload of steers which he himself planned to take to Omaha. He gathered another of cows that he had managed to dispose of to a ranchman in a distant part of the State. The foreman was to deliver these. At the last moment Copperage had been brought back to the ranch with a broken arm, having fractured it in a fall from a fence at the shipping pens. He had sent the foreman on with the trainload for Omaha. And because there wasn't another man available he had been compelled to call on Nate to deliver the cow shipment.

"Collect cash money," he had ordered, standing like a stoic old warrior outside his front door, holding up the broken arm with his other arm. "And for God sakes," he had pleaded wrathfully and insultingly, "don't lose it. Don't run off with it to wherever you come from when you strayed in here on me. Don't play no tricks with it like you tricked me about my gal—courtin' and marryin' her on the sly. I'm ruint if you don't git back with that money. Ruint anyhow, practically. D'think you can go and collect and git back? Hey?"

Milda put her hand on Nate's shoulder in her quiet way, without a word. And Nate knew what she was conveying to him.

"Go. Handle the shipment in good shape. Get back with the money. And dad will change his attitude toward you."

So Nate had gone—grabbing his old telescope bag with a change of clothing, hurrying to the shipping pens in the car that had brought Copperage in, and catching the stock train with half a minute to spare.

But it was a different story now in the matter of catching the west bound limited toward home.

"Luck!" he ejaculated again as the train seemed to give a final whisk of its tail in a cloud of dust.

He was already twenty-four hours behind his schedule, because after unloading the shipment he had had to help drive the cows to the buyer's ranch.

As he stood there blasting a train that was so inconsiderate as to leave on time, the ringing of another locomotive bell called his attention to a long freight train that evidently had sidetracked to let the limited pass and was now pulling out on the main line. An "Ex." on the engine's indicator told him it was an extra—a mile or so of empty refrigerator and boxcars being moved west. Nate's lean grim face brightened.

"By heavens," he thought, "she'll travel fast and get to the Junction on the tail end of the passenger. That'd let me catch the north bound dinky for home and save me a full twenty-four hours."

HE HAD heard such trains called "hobo specials" because so many tramps rode them. He didn't want company, not with eighteen thousand dollars in his telescope. Warily he swept the long line of cars fore and aft for the furtive figures of hoboes trying to board it. But not a man was in sight, not even a brakeman to interfere with him.

"I'll chance it," he decided, "if I never see the back of my neck."

He went on the short distance to the tracks and started walking beside the moving train, watching over his shoulder for a boxcar with the door open to come along. With its head on the down grade

the string of empties picked up speed swiftly, the wheels clicking over the rails faster and faster.

No car with an open door came along. He saw that he must act quickly or miss another train. Trotting, he reached up and shoved at a closed door. It slid open at the third attempt. He set the telescope inside on the floor. Then he tried to heave himself in after it.

Two or three attampts to throw himself up and across the doorsill failed. He could not run well in his high-heel boots. Besides, horses were his mounts, not box-cars. The door drew away from him. Run as he could he could not regain it, could not quite reach in to retrieve the telescope.

Something like panic bit at him. Then he remembered the ladder on the corner of the car. As it came up to him he seized a rung and threw himself up, getting his feet on the lowermost step.,

While Nate clung for a moment like a human fly, getting back his spent wind, he looked around at the end of the car to see if it had an end door. It was an old wooden structure, and had such a door. He worked his way to it, standing on the end sill and holding to any metal projections that he could get his fingers on.

The door slid open easily. He got one leg through, straddled his body through and dropped to the floor inside. As he landed his glance went to where he had set the telescope.

The bag was gone.

NATE'S FIRST thought was that the telescope had jolted out of the car by way of the open door. He looked out and back along the track. No bag was in sight. His common sense immediately told him that it could not have jolted out. Somebody had got it. But who, and how? Nobody was in sight along the track. And he could have seen a man, for the train was out of town by now and there was no concealment for a man along the track-side. He looked from the opposite side door with the same negative result.

This surely meant but one thing—the telescope was still on board. The other end door of the car was open. In a second he was at it. He half expected to see a man squatting on the bumpers between the cars. But no man was there. The adjacent car was of steel, a newer model without an end door. Nate crawled out and mounted to its roof.

Having started forward he kept on in the direction the train was traveling. Here on the open roof the tugging wind and the swaying train were like a man trying to throw him off. Once he was thrown to his knees, and he crawled a short way on all fours.

The next car was likewise of steel. He hurried on across it. The third car was wooden and like the first was equipped with an end door. He slid down the hand brake rod and peeped in at an open crack.

Three men were inside squatting around his telescope. They were fumbling at the straps, trying to unbuckle them with cold-clumsy hands.

Nate shoved at the little door. It was in a cramp and did not budge. He braced a leg against the adjacent car and bucked at the door with shoulder and hand, frantic with hurry. Suddenly the door released from the cramp and shot open with a bump. The roar of the train and the wind muffled the noise.

Nate straddled through as he had at the other doors. He eased forward on tiptoe, only one thing in mind, and that to surprise the men and get back his money—another man's money.

He sprang upon the men without warning. He stiff armed one and sent him over sideways. He kicked at another, tearing the fellow's pants with his spur. The third leaped backward out of reach.

Nate grabbed up the telescope and gathered it to him with a kind of fierceness. In the moment that followed they stood in belligerent astonishment sizing one another up.

The three wore big shapeless caps and rusty sweaters. They were of a type that Nate thought of as belonging in the back

street dives of cities. One was lean and tall, about Nate's size, with a white, sharp face, sharp chin, sharp eyes. Another was a little man, wizened and weak faced. The third was between these two in size, thick and strong, heavy jawed and dull faced, the picture of a fifth rate pug. They were all alike in one thing besides their clothes —they were half frozen.

The tall man's eyes slitted with a sharp cunning, which changed to a shrewd grin as he spoke.

"Whatcha got in that hick telescope?" he asked. "Fightin' for't like a she bear cat wit' a batch o' kittens."

And Nate knew that his fierceness had betrayed him.

SOMEWHERE on the cattle train Nate had read a front page news story, in the city daily that circulated widely in his country, about three men who had held up a street car conductor at the edge of the city late at night. A fracas had resulted in which the car man was killed. A woman approaching the car from the darkness had seen the three men and had furnished the police with descriptions—three men in big caps and sweaters, one tall, one middle sized and one short.

For once the paper did not say that arrests were imminent. It said instead that apparently the men had made good their escape. Nate had no doubt that these were the wanted trio; for besides their clothes and their suspicious looks, this train that they were riding was on a direct line from the city.

Nate turned to the open door to drop out and part company. The train by now was hammering over the rails. The ground was sliding along like a river in flood. Stampeding and pitching broncos had no terror for the cowboy, but this was something different. He voluntarily gave back a step from the danger, and faced the men.

The tall man spoke again.

"That's right, bo, don't jump out. It'd roll you up. Whatcha got in that telescope? Hooch?"

"Hooch?" echoed the middle sized man eagerly. "Gol, hooch would be warmin'!"

"Clothes. Yuh got clothes in it, ain'tcha?" whined the smallest of the trio. "That's what we swiped it for. G'sakes, bo, shell 'em out. My bones is turned to ice cream. We been in this boat for a year."

He shuddered. They all closed in a little, looking at the telescope.

"Look't him hug it!" exclaimed the tall man. "Whatcha got in it, guy, huh?"

Nate knew that his clinging to the bag with such an air of desperation was firing their suspicions higher and higher. He loosened his grip and set the telescope down at his feet.

"I haven't any hooch," he said.

The man made a movement as if to take up the telescope.

"Stay back!" Nate snarled.

"Watch out, Gooch," warned the middle sized man. "He'll pull his gun on you."

"Aw," sneered Gooch, as appeared to be the tall man's name, "he ain't got no rod."

But he drew back doubtfully.

"Cowboys is always got rods," declared the little man. "Don't you never see no movies?"

"Don't see no holster on him," Gooch argued.

"It's under his coat. See his coat bulge under his left arm?"

Nate was leaning against the wall of the car, at the edge of the door. His left hand in his pants pocket gave the bulge to the coat. They eyed the lump, and him, with a curious interest. Then as if to change the subject they began to flail their bodies with their arms, and to stamp their feet, fighting against the cold.

The train was running west and northwest, and the north wind had a full sweep at it. The gale poured in at the open doors from a thousand miles of range country. The men stamped about and slapped their arms on their thighs. And all the time they studied Nate with a curious interest.

"G'sakes, bo," whined the little man,

"if you won't give no clo's shut that door, won'tcha, to keep out the wind?"

"Make it too dark in here," replied Nate, who had no intention of shutting off his avenue of escape in case they attacked him.

The little man slipped past him, careful to keep out of his reach, and closed the end door by which Nate had entered. Then he slipped back again. Nate felt a pang of sympathy for the blue and drawn little fellow. But he reminded himself that he was custodian of another man's money, and a girl's happiness. These men would rob him if they could, possibly kill him if they found out what was in the bag. So he kept the door open and watched them.

In the midst of their narrow eyeing of him and the telescope the middle sized man remembered the jagged rent that Nate's spur had torn in his trousers. He fingered it, and the other two men saw it, and all eyes went to Nate's spurs.

AN EXPLANATION of their curious, hesitant interest came to Nate in a flash. They were eastern men. Anyhow city men. A live cowboy was something new in their experience. An unknown quantity. A man fearfully quick on the draw. They did not know what to expect.

Nate laughed out in the reaction of relief. These men could be bluffed, could be held off indefinitely. He had seen men bluffed by an easy show of confidence, had so bluffed men himself. He relaxed nonchalantly and awaited their next move, if they had one. The slit eyed Gooch evidently perceived the subtle change in Nate, for he spoke with a faintly puzzled note.

"Aw, guy, be a sport. Come t'rough wit' some clothes, er hooch, er whatever you got in that rube Gladstun."

Nate grinned.

"If the contents o' this pasteboard box is itchin' you," he invited, "come and take a look."

"Don't git fresh, feller," rumbled the middle sized man, the pug, "er I'll give yuh a shot o' dis fer a change."

He made an uppercutting gesture with his heavy fist.

"Guy," said Gooch, "I got a hunch you got money in that hick telescope."

This was obviously a thrust in the dark. Nate slid the telescope a few inches toward the man with his toe.

"Step into my parlor, says the spider to the big green horse fly," said Nate flippantly. "Have a look."

This nettled them. Gooch spat angrily. Then he forced a grin.

"You win, bo," he said. "What's the joke? Whatcha want to be so tight for wit' t'ree poor bums?"

"Shut the door, hey, won'tcha?" wailed the little man. "I'm bleedin' cold."

"I ain't cold," said Nate.

"*You* ain't cold!" snarled Gooch.

This was not exactly true. Nate was beginning to feel the cut of the wind. But in his reaction from tenseness the sweat had broken out on his forehead. It seemed now that he could feel it trickling down. A perverse impulse seized him to wipe it off. And in something of bravado, to show the men how easily he was taking all this, he pulled off his hat and drew a handkerchief from his hip-pocket.

As the red bandanna came out, two scraps of paper came with it. The wind caught them and twirled them toward the three men. They darted this way and that, like fidgety butterflies. One went into a corner and Gooch reached out and plucked the other out of the air. But before he examined it he looked at Nate, who had straightened away from the wall, forgetful of the bulge in his coat.

"Look't!" Gooch cried. "He ain't got no gun! The bulge—it's gone."

Then Gooch read the paper, and a vicious grin spread over his face.

NATE KNEW well enough what the bits of paper were. One was his shipper's pass on which he had meant to ride home. The other he had got at the bank.

When Nate and the buyer of the cows

had reached town, just before train time and after banking hours, and while they warmed themselves at the bank's big stove, the cashier had written down a statement of the money due Copperage—so much for two-year-old heifers, so much for the second grade cows, so much for old stuff, and "total cash $18,000."

As the cashier was counting out the money Nate dug his railway pass from the jumble of clothing in his telescope. He finished just as the cashier returned to the table and dumped down an armload of currency. To keep from mislaying the pass, Nate picked it up, along with the statement of the amounts, and put the two papers temporarily in his hip pocket.

Nate and the cashier discussed briefly how the money could best be carried. It was in bills mostly of small denominations—just what a rural bank would have for its daily cash—and the bulk was too much for Nate's pockets. So he wrapped it in a shirt and put it in the telescope. This would have been safe enough had he caught the passenger train. Within an hour after its arrival at the Junction he would have been on board the dinky with friends and acquaintances from his own country. But in racing for and missing the limited he had forgotten about the statement in his hip pocket. And now Gooch had it.

Seeing Gooch's malicious grin, the other two hoboes bent over the paper and read it. And all the while Gooch never took his eyes off of Nate.

"Eighteen grand in that rube Gladstun!" he croaked hoarsely. "*That's* why you hugged it like a sweet mama."

The little man had picked up the pass. Gooch plucked it out of his fingers and pondered its significance.

"Umm—'Shipper's Pass,'" he read, and examined the other side of the paper. "Umm—you been shippin' the wild and woolly moo-moos, what? And got eighteen grand for 'em."

"Wouldn't I be a fool," retorted Nate, leaning easily again against the car wall, "to carry a lot of money like that around with me?"

"If you ain't got it," Gooch challenged, "dump out that telescope and show us."

They waited, all caught up, to see what Nate would answer to this. Nate realized that he was cornered. A fury began to gather in him that these irresponsible tramps, these murderous hoodlums, should block his attempt to serve Old Man Copperage and the gentle Milda.

He looked at the sliding ground outside, the steep embankment, the flitting telegraph poles, the little patches of sharp and frozen snow here and there that could tear a man's body. The train by now was thundering over the rails at fifty or sixty miles an hour, the boxcar was careening, the wheels shrieking their agony of speed. The cowboy shrank inwardly from the terror that was so unlike milling herds and crowding horses.

When the men saw that Nate was not going to accept their challenge to open the bag, they laughed out in scornful triumph.

"You can't do it, can you, Mister Dressed-up Movie Cowboy?" taunted Gooch. "I had a hunch you guys was fakes."

Their laughter increased—the loose crazy laughter of men laving in unexpected gold—or of men suddenly reprieved from the electric chair.

"Eighteen grand!" cackled Gooch. "A warm room, hot feed, hooch, the skoits, and the cops left in the lurch."

The laughter of the little man was almost a sobbing.

Gooch had been tearing the railway pass and the cashier's memorandum into small bits. Now he stepped to the side of the open door opposite Nate and let the scraps flitter out on the wind.

"Don't want no clues left," he said, grim and merciless all at once. "Come on, Banty, Tweed, let's ride him."

THE GATHERING wrath in Nate at these rusty, big capped city aliens mounted higher. They were the type that the cow country instinctively bristles at. But Nate tried to hold himself calm, tried to

think what to do. They were emotionally convinced that he had the money. No use to argue that he didn't have it. But if they only knew how desperate he was, if they only understood that he was fighting for his whole future existence, they might comprehend what they were up against and hold off. It was a slim hope for Nate. But an overwhelming impulse came to him to put all his cards on the table and make a supreme effort to keep them from attacking.

"Listen, you murderers," he rasped, using the epithet unwittingly. "I *have* got eighteen thousand dollars in this telescope. It's not my money. It belongs to a man I'm trying to make good with. My father-in-law. He don't like me. I've only been married a month—to a little woman I love. Do you get what I'm aimin' at? Do you coyotes get the picture? I'm desperate. I'll put everything I've got into the fight with you. You rats haven't got guns either, or you'd be using them. I'll kill you—I'll throw you out—"

He stopped. They were not heeding him. They were looking at one another with dumb consternation in their faces.

"D'y hear what he said?" whispered Gooch. "Murderers!"

"Gawd," whimpered the little man. "He knows. We'll set in the hot chair."

"We'll get him!" snarled Gooch. "The money too!"

For the first time Nate was really afraid. They could do for him, even if they were unarmed—three determined, desperate men.

They moved on Nate like a vicious wolf pack.

In a pinch a man chooses what for the instant is the lesser danger—or his instincts choose for him. As the men closed in, Nate flung himself down in the doorway, legs out, telescope clutched to him, ready to slide.

The move had an unexpected effect on the assailants. Almost within reach Gooch checked the attack in consternation, spreading out his arms to stop his companions.

"Wait!" he breathed.

Nate was sitting on the thin edge of nothing. A squirm of his body and he would be out before they could take the final step, before they could reach out and clutch him.

"Wait!" Gooch panted. "He'll jump! He'll get away!"

Nate sensed the change in them with swift comprehension. They were no more eager than he to make the leap from the flying train. If he went they lost him and the money—or else they would have to follow him out. He took instant advantage of their confusion.

"Back!" he sang. "Clear back, or out I go!"

They inched back indecisively, foiled, chagrined. And the little man flung out a bitter reproach to Gooch.

"If youse hadn't made us throw away our guns we could wing him, you—"

"Quit y'r yappin' about that!" snarled Gooch savagely. "You know where we'd have been if the bulls had caught us with the guns and knives."

As if these words suggested something, Gooch turned back to Nate, his eyes slitting cunningly.

"You win, guy," he said. "You see we ain't got no guns. Banty spilled de beans. We'll go to the end of the car. You come back in and shut that door to keep out the cold."

"Think you can trick me that easy?" retorted Nate. "I sit right here in this door till we get to the Junction."

"I don't think you will," said Gooch coolly. "You can't stand the cold that long."

THE TRAMPS retired to the end of the car and were soon beating their hands against their thighs and stamping about. At the same time they watched Nate with something like an air of confident waiting. They talked among themselves, shouting above the roar of the train and the wind. Nate caught some of the phrases—"Train slow down on a grade"—"push him"—"wait till dark"—

"jump him when we pull into the Junction." It was enough for Nate to understand that they were revolving schemes to get him.

Nate's wits were not idle. He canvassed possibilities. He wished that he could get out of the car by way of the end door and make it back to the caboose. But he knew they would have him before he could get the door open.

Gooch fished a railway timetable from his hip pocket and examined it. Nate was only slightly familiar with the route; he knew that there was one station before they arrived at the Junction—a little watertank place called Conejo. It consisted of a depot, store and three or four houses. There was not one chance in a hundred that this string of empties would stop there—unless such a stop could be brought about.

And why not?—Nate asked himself. The train was at this moment bending on a curve. Both the engine and the caboose were in view. Nate pulled off his hat and began to wave it. If the trainmen should see him his frantic gestures might arouse their suspicions or apprehensions. If the train did not stop at Conejo, at least a brakeman might make his way forward to investigate.

But another quick born hope of Nate's soon went a-glimmering. Nobody answered from cab or caboose. The cab window was closed with striped canvas to keep out the wind; and as to the conductor and shacks, Nate thought bitterly that as likely as not they were playing pinochle or sleepily toasting themselves by a hot stove on this hundred mile run.

With the train straightened out again, diminishing his slim chances of the trainmen seeing his waving hat along the mile of cars, another scheme came to Nate. Why not throw out a written S.O.S. to the station agent at Conejo? Some message to arouse the man and cause him to signal to the men in the caboose, or induce him to telegraph to the agent at the Junction.

He dug out a stub pencil and a paper cigaret carton. He was surprised to find out how numb his hands had become. Busy with his scheming he had forgotten the cold. His fingers were so stiff that he could hardly tear the carton open. For the first time he felt apprehension that Gooch might be right about his not holding out against the frigid weather.

With the flattened paper on the telescope he began to scribble. He could scarcely make his fingers hold the pencil. The tramps nosed up to see what he was doing. He warned them back with threats that if they came within reach he would slide out. They watched him like hawks, but kept well back. When the message was finished it consisted of half a dozen crudely written words.

"Help—murderers—wire J u n c t i o n police—help."

Then Nate waited. The opportunity came once more, on a curve, to wave his hat. But no answer came. After awhile the little huddle that was Conejo came into sight. The train gave no indication of slowing down.

The big engine passed the depot. Nate strained for a sight of the agent. At the same time he watched the men behind him.

His car approached the station. He began to wave his hat. The agent was not on the platform. Would he come out yet? Would he be looking from a window? The car came up. The agent was not to be seen. Nate flung the note anyhow, hoping some one would see it. The wind caught the paper and whisked it away.

The men in the car laughed raucously.

Nate saw one human being in the village as the train thundered through—a woman carrying in a hod of coal. He waved and shouted. But she was too busy struggling with the gale even to glance at the train.

The thundering freight left Conejo behind, and Nate was no better off than before. And sixty miles yet to go to the Junction, with the howling, savage wind already driving a dangerous cold into his flesh.

AFTER WHAT seemed like a long time, Gooch arose stiffly from the corner where he and the other two men crouched in miserable weariness and came forward with a proposition to Nate.

By now the sun was down, and with its going the wind had taken on a sharper edge and a deeper chill. Nate had no recollection of such cold in his body. He had supposed that riding a horse in the cattle work was the coldest occupation on earth, but this wind out of the north scouring the side of the train without let up was a thousand times colder. He had no defense against it, except his wool lined leather jacket that now was utterly inadequate, while if he had been riding a horse he would have gotten off and walked part of the time. His feet and lower legs were so numb that he could no longer tell by the sense of feel whether they were still hanging out of the door. And worse than anything else was the doubt in his mind that he could hold out till the train arrived at the Junction.

"Lissen, guy," Gooch began, kicking his legs to take out the kinks, "we're gonna getcha, see? When we hit this next division town we'll shove you soon as the rattler throws on her brakes and slows down. But we don't want to hurt no guy, see? You come in here and divvy up that eighteen thou four ways and we don't do for you. Four grand and a half apiece—you get in on it, see? You keep your part same as us. What you prattle to that?"

"You get your hands on the cash," said Nate, "and I'd never know what hit me."

"Nothing like, bo. We don't want any more trouble than we got. This bunch of empties is headed for California. We'll stick as long as we can, and keep you wit' us, see? In sunny Cal we let you loose, an' you have your forty-five hundred to go back home wit', er go to hell if you want. Otherwise we take it all, and fix you besides."

The cool threat touched a match to a smoldering resentment in Nate against his father-in-law. The fool, always demanding cash! Look what it had let him in for! He forgot that Copperage had an eccentric's reason for his queer habit: In his early beginnings the ranchman had been the victim of a "busted" bank. Then just when he was recovering from this financial swat a red haired commission agent had sold several cars of cattle for him and absconded with the money. These experiences embittered Copperage, and he swore a violent oath that never again would he make a deal except for cash. He reversed the initials of his name —Daniel Ottawa Copperage—and made them his brand. His ranch was known far and wide as the C O D or Cash On Delivery. This was in keeping with other oddities of his character, such as not tolerating a red haired man on his place, wearing a fur cap summer and winter alike, and asserting that no man was honest enough to "splice up with his gal."

Nate's thought slid by degrees from Copperage to Milda, and the resentment toward her father faded out. It was replaced by a phrase that had got to going in his mind:

"Another man's money—another man's money."

It was like a whip on his back.

"You taking a long time to make up your mind, guy," said Gooch. "How about coming t'rough like a johnny-wise man, hey?"

"I'd see you in hell first!" snarled Nate.

"All right, bo. Have it your own way, have it your own way."

Gooch went back to his corner. The little man was whimpering and muttering.

They'd get him, Nate told himself. The cards were stacked against one fool cowhand named Nate Dawson. He would be thrown out, done for, and the men would get away with the money. But he'd be damned if he wouldn't hold out as long as he could. That was Nate's rule in a strain—hold on as long as he could.

The passing of time dulled in his mind. He could not tell how long it had been since they passed Conejo—twenty minutes or an hour. He was dimly aware

that dusk was thickening over the empty and desolate country, night coming on. But he was really aware of little except the torture of the cold.

Once, just after passing Conejo, he had got to his feet to kick and slap and start up circulation. But the three men had come up at once to stand just across the doorway from him. And the train had lurched and almost thrown him into their arms. He had recovered himself just in time. After that he had sat down again and remained there.

The process of hitching himself back from the brink with his palms set on the floor, or with his elbow against the edge of the door, had become automatic. He did it time after time. But he was so dull now that he could hardly tell by any sense of feel when he had got shaken to the edge.

He had thrust his left hand under one of the straps of the telescope. It was exposed to the wind and it seemed frozen there.

It occurred to him to get up and face the men, fight it out, get it over with. Hot action would be better than freezing and falling out. But he couldn't quite make up his mind to it. Better to let well enough alone and hold on.

Then there began to be definite blank periods in his mind. Whether they lasted only for seconds, or for minutes, he did not know. Didn't care much.

Slowly it dawned on him that he was feeling easier. Was feeling almost cozy. He thought that the wind must have stopped, or veered to a warm south wind. And then in a flash the significance of his changed sensation came to him. He was being overpowered by the cold! It was like a slap in the face. His startled heart began to pound. And without knowing just how he accomplished it, he was up on his feet in the car.

He had the curious sensation for a moment of being suspended in the air. This was because he could not feel his feet on the floor. His joints seemed to creak, his muscles to stretch and give like something solid.

Suddenly he knew that he must fight it out now with the men. If they'd only hold off till he got limbered a bit.

He could not see into the dark end of the car to make out what the men were doing. But they did hold off a minute. Had they plunged into the attack as soon as Nate was up the next minute would have been different. But they must have been stiff and numb also.

"You going to divvy?" finally came the query from Gooch.

"No," said Nate.

They came at him then all in a bunch.

NATE MET the attack with stiff and awkward out-thrusting of his long arms. He was no trained fighter, but in the rough and tumble of the bunk houses he had been able to take care of himself. Yet whatever natural facility he possessed did him no good now. His muscles were bound. And the quickness of his feet were likewise hampered by the cold and by the swaying of the car.

The assailants were hampered by the same conditions. Their blows were not from fists but from hands that refused to double up tightly. They tried to seize Nate but their fingers could not hold. Yet they crowded and beat him backward in the blackness of the car.

They grunted and made inarticulate sounds. Only the heavy voice of the middle sized man, the pug, said words:

"Lemme swing at him! Lemme give him a haymaker!" And once:

"Thumb his eye!"

Back and back they staggered and stumbled, blows striking, blows missing. Nate hardly felt them when they landed.

Then suddenly Nate's back was against the end of the car and Gooch and one of the others was at him close in. A heavy blow landed on his mouth, cracking his head against the wall. Other terrific blows. One in his eye. He managed somehow to seize the man's wrist.

Even in the midst of this rain of blows Nate saw that one of the men—the little man—had dropped out of the fight and

was at the telescope. The faint light still coming in through the door revealed him.

Seeing the money in jeopardy—this was what aroused Nate to decisive fury. Gooch was pressing him against the wall. Nate knew that by the size of the man. His beard stubble was scraping Nate's forehead, his fingers were tightening on Nate's throat.

Nate began to wheeze and haul at his breath. He let go of the other man's wrist to swing upward at full arm's length. His fist caught the man under the chin and, through luck, sent him back and down.

Nate writhed under the hand at his throat. His shoulders and neck were against the car. He lifted one knee and shoved Gooch back a little. Before Gooch could come in again, Nate doubled up his leg and set his foot against Gooch's stomach. Then he straightened his leg out.

Braced as Nate was, the shoving kick flung Gooch slantwise against the side of the car with an impact that sounded above the roar of the train. In the rebound Gooch rammed into the other man, who was just rising. They both went down together.

Nate leaped over the two and flung himself at the little man with the telescope.

The bantam was in the act of bending over the bag and yanking at one of the straps. Nate catapulted into him and sent him sprawling.

Nate grabbed up the telescope. In the same instant the car began to buck. There was a shriek and chatter of brakes. Nate braced himself to keep his feet. He thought the train was going off the rails.

Then he saw a light out through the door—many lights, like stars. They were the lights of a town. And Nate understood. The train was slowing down for the Junction!

Nate felt more than saw the two men coming at him out of the blackness of the car. He flung himself down into the door. And this time he slid out.

LATE THE next day Nate limped into the living room of old Cash Copperage's ranch house, Milda at his side. Copperage was nursing his broken arm and toasting by a hot fire. Nate's left arm was in splints and a sling. One eye was black. One side of his face was skinned and scratched. His lips were puffed. He dropped the telescope in front of Copperage.

"There's your cash," he said. "All of it."

"Lud sake!" ejaculated the ranchman, staring at Nate incredulously. "You look like you been run through a meat grinder."

Nate grinned, showing a hole where a front tooth had been but was no longer. Milda was looking up at him in adoration.

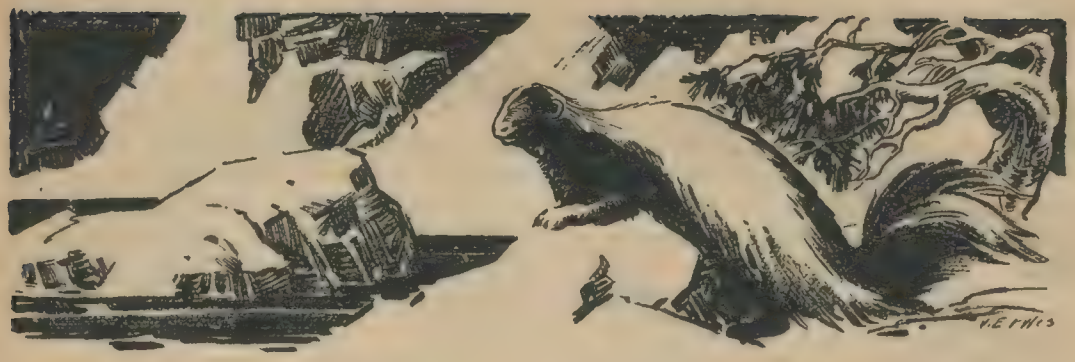
Nate told his story in neat flings of sentences, while old Copperage gaped.

"So I beat the bums to the nearest lighted place," he finished. "It was a restaurant. I phoned to the sheriff and he turned out the town. By the time I caught the north bound train they'd rounded up the three of 'em and had 'em safe and snug by the jail fire. The little fellow snitched. Gooch was the one that shot and killed the street car man."

"Yeah. Uhhuh. But what happened to you?"

"Well, when I jumped out of the car," said Nate, "it rolled me a little. Broke my arm. Sandpapered my face on the cinders. Sprained my laig. Skinned my elbow. Knocked out a tooth on a crosstie. The hoodlums came after me all right but I gave 'em the dodge in the dark."

"Ummm——" muttered Copperage. A twinkle gathered deep in his eyes. "Looks like most o' this family has got busted arms," he said. " 'Spose we'll have to keep the foreman awhile yet till you git able to take over the field bossin' of the C O D. Go on and eat y'r supper 'fore it gits cold. Mildy's been cookin' it for you ever since you phoned from town you was comin' home."



The EXPLORER

A Tale of the Arctic

By F. ST. MARS

LOVE of exploration for the good of the race must be all right enough, but it may prove expensive to the individual if pursued too far.

Now that polecat was a case in point. He went exploring because he was a weasel; or a polecat, which is the same thing, and it proved expensive.

Now to be an explorer you must have certain peculiarities; some people call them eccentricities, but that's not for us to say. You must be inquisitive beyond ordinary, and the polecat was of the weasel tribe, which guaranteed him *there*. You must be of a roving, restless disposition, and again, that is the abiding curse of the weasels. And you must have an exceedingly good opinion of your own company. Also you must be as hard as nickel steel nails and own no nerves at all.

That polecat was just ordinary polecat of the male gender. That is a beast boasting some twenty-four inches by the tape, and no height to mention; low, stocky, long, coarse furred, bush tailed, dark, blacky-yellowish brindled, yellowish bellied, sharp nosed, round eared, fiendishly fanged and long necked.

For the rest, that is as to his character, he was two parts bulldog, one part devil and one part little beastie; the various parts cropping up collectively or separately, unexpectedly. And he had no soul.

As spring advanced—but you wouldn't have known it to look at the ice locked land—he had, always alone, wandered to the shores of that sea whose other name is not Black, and from thence down, or up rather, the course of a river, frozen too. You will have to take my word for it that he wandered there, unless you had followed his tracks in the snow where it was soft, for he might never have passed that way at all, for all the world at large saw of him.

He worked his way circumspectly, slipping from half buried dwarf birch wood to more than half buried stunted willow thicket, unostentatiously by night, or, when he hoped no one was looking, by day. This was necessary because here in the North, as in the tropics, Nature ran some of her larger hunting propositions as going concerns, and a dark beast like a polecat showed some way on driven snow.

He had no wish to prove his right to the title of the "Black Hope" against either a white tailed sea eagle, a snowy owl as big as a turkey, or a northern lynx, all hungry you might be sure.

Such argument might come too expensive. Things were hard of course, but he was a hard beast, not cursed with imagination. Being slow and too low to see far, he had to trust mainly to his nose for food. But he had brains and could use them far better than people guessed, and somehow or other he contrived that a sufficient number of the white invisible Arctic hares, and willow grouse in their houses under the snow, and redpolls clinging upside down like gay balls of acrobatic feathers, should remain with him forever to keep him, as I have said, as hard as nickel steel nails.

The spring rushed on apace, but again you must take my word for it, there being no spring-like appearances around; or, better still, take the word of the birds who began to rush on apace too. They just became out of nowhere and nothing, like sprites and spirits conjured into being by the magic northern lights. And scarcely a day passed but Fitch, the polecat, who, by the way, had nothing to do with poles, and smelled much too abominably to have anything in common with the fastidious cats, peering up through the fretwork of birch twigs or, glaring out with his Notre Dame devil's face across the ironbound stream, saw some new bird form winging its way northward.

And northward too went he, following instinctively it seemed the mysterious line of migration so that, if there is anything at all in the glacial theory as applied to account for migration, he may have been only fulfilling his destiny, obeying some blind law of Nature to push northward, always northward to the homes of his ancestors. And if this were so it may well be, for aught I know, that he was the first of his tribe to penetrate back thus far on the trail of the glacier into the land from whence his ultimate dim forefathers had been driven æons ago.

But, as I have said, although he undoubtedly had a highly handy brain, and no soul, and no imagination, he didn't know about these important, or unimportant matters, and therefore didn't care—which was a good job for the writer perhaps, because if he had known he would have unquestionably turned back and "done this stay in".

You see, ancestors a few hundred thousand years defunct were for him of considerably less importance than a mate in the nearest possible future.

That was the meaning of the wander. That was why he was there, I have a shrewd suspicion. But any fool bird could have told him he was going the wrong way for *that*, all the same.

Eventually the stream, or the ice of it, had panned out, and the polecat had crossed by the way of a chain of dark, cold hollows that would in a more congenial climate have been swamps and lonely pools. Now it was ice, of course, as the scars and grooves on the water whitened tiers attested.

Lost in the heart of nameless woods, the polecat crossed to another stream. But this stream was an altogether different and mighty matter. The polecat could barely, even by sitting upon his haunches straight, like a dog digging, see to the opposite bank of it. And down its middle ran a road, a man-made road on the snow on the ice, but there appeared to be no living man within very many miles to use it.

Obviously the way to go was up or down the river.

The birds were going down it, northward. Now a party of uncertain northern herring gulls; now a little flock of gay, red breasted pipits; later a saber winged, dashing, slashing, peregrine falcon; later, too, like a blown bit of yellow-green fluff, what on earth was *it* doing here? A tiny willow warbler. Or again, a wedge of swift, long necked, long tailed, pintail duck, or a slouching, untidy raven, black as the pit from whence he was digged, all on a pilgrimage north down the river of still waters. And down the river too wandered the polecat.

Thus then he meandered, the snow water pools on the ice growing larger and more numerous as he went, the snow under the trees getting blacker and blacker, as seen from a distance, and the swamps growing softer and softer every

noon, till at last after many days he came into the mouth of that river—and stopped.

It was a place of many low islands, of channels running no whither, of a lone, level, white shore, and of northward the motionless, frozen ocean, and of southward, the dead, still, frozen tundra, all white under the wheeling, whirling birds and the pale sun.

And at home they were nesting, those birds, were nesting among the almond scented may and the bursting foliage; were nesting in the luscious, golden starred hay grass and in the ivied eaves were nesting also—nesting under the deep blue sky and the hot, life giving sun. And what is more, they were nesting here too.

WHEREVER a bare patch free of snow existed large enough to expose the pebbles, or the reindeer moss, wherever, in dwarf rhododendron thicket, or stunted, riven birch, a rotting log or two had drifted together to form a barrier against any masterless moving ice, or where the flotsam of flood had collected low among the tangled twigs and offered secure hold, they were hard but secretly at it, those birds, a-nesting merrily. Snow bunting, reed bunting, Siberian chiffchaff, redpoll, red throated pipit, Lapland bunting, crossbill, fieldfare, redwing, teek sandpiper, ruff, red necked phalarope, widgeon, scoter, golden plover, merlin falcon, jay, and raven after their kind—they were all at nesting, or trying to, if their neighbors would let them.

But the polecat was not thinking of these. They all hid remarkably well, or kept so much to the open that the likes of him had small chance to get near them. True, he stalked a golden plover down a half frozen black tarn, very cold that water was too, and slew a scoter duck very neatly on her nest of down among the thickets of an island where she sat, but a dark shape, that may have been a wolf or a lynx, very nearly stalked him, and a crusty old wild bean goose gander—if I may so put it—all but succeeded in slaying him with a blow from his wing, because, forsooth, he showed a quite natural solicitude for the gander's wife and her home.

But the polecat, as I have told you, was not thinking of these things; for being, as already mentioned, cursed with the abiding curse of all weasels, an insatiable curiosity, he had his heart fixed on the one place he had not seen. Had he not crossed the river, getting wet in the snow puddles for his pains, half a hundred times on his way downstream simply to see the other side? Had he not explored every side way, poked into and out of every thicket, crossed every fallen tree, crept under every windfall that came in his path simply and solely for no other reason than unsleeping, irresistible curiosity? The curiosity if you like, that goes to make the explorer.

Wherefore, we find him, standing on the beach staring northward to where, far out to sea, far out at any rate as he on a log could view, a low prowed whale backed, dim looking island heaved half out of the ice. Fringed it was and furred with some kind of grass, swept bare by the winds of open space of most of its snow, and surrounded—this was the point that had attracted his attention first, I fancy—by a screaming cloud of birds.

He ardently desired to explore that place, and for reasons he had none unless being a polecat and one of the great tribe *mustela* can be taken as a reason.

You will note that he had come as far as he well could, and nothing lay before him, but that closed, forbidding, that terrible, that terrifying sea.

Therefore, he wanted to go just that one mile or two farther, just out to that island, that spit of land beyond the mouth of the river, which indeed marked the mouth of the river from seaward. He was really very human in this, and he went.

Being no fool, however, he chose the best time possible from his point of view. It was then, in the dead of night, by the clock only, in the teeth of a howling, tearing, icy storm of wind and rain from the northwest that he essayed the task and went.

If he had only had the sense to pause and look he would have seen that the snow face of the land was dissolving bodily into tears, and that the ice was looking like a newly painted door that has been in a hot sun, and then well watered. But he was too low in the leg to see much, and too much occupied—with the business of keeping a whole skin *en route* and his desire to accomplish the journey quickly—to think.

You barely saw him go out over the frozen ocean. In fact, as much as he knew he was using all his knowledge of the art of self-effacement as practised among the wild hunters in order that nobody should see him. Indeed, it was wonderful how very little that dark colored beast showed up on that light shelterless expanse, into which, as a matter of fact, he was fairly gumming himself for fear of detection.

Ordinarily he ought to have been able to skulk and creep along behind ice hummock and snow ridge, in trough, fairly well dry. In reality, he got most infernally wet, for the only thing about the whole contraption which did not seem unstable was the ice; that at any rate was solid, for he walked on it. Otherwise he might have had his doubts, and even then he had to *feel* for the cracks.

Once clear of the shelter of the headland opposite he, though a low beast, realized what the force of the northwest gale was, and he was beginning to think about the—by comparison—warm shelter of birch thickets and willow swamps and cosy windfalls when, without any preliminary warning at all, somebody let out a deep: "Haw-haw-haw-haw!" of mirth, close above his head.

It was almost exactly as if an old and toffish major — majah, I mean—had chosen that moment to see a good joke, by gad, right there in that very spot of all spots.

Fitch the polecat knew nothing about majors, not even the end of a gun barrel aspect of them. The little beastie quarter of him was all uppermost in that instant, and he moved without touching anything solid on the way, about one clear yard in the fiftieth of a second.

The acrobatics seemed to probe the military gentleman above to fresh merriment, so that he burst forth again with his deep, important, throaty:

"Haw-haw-haw-haw!"

And Fitch nearly had a fit—not a fit of laughter; the other sort of fit. He took one more fine leap, which really did him credit for his size, and whisking round quicker than pussy chases her tail, two or three times, this way and that, finally looked up and snapped into the aspect of a frozen image on the spot.

Now polecats are not given to fear anything by land or sea, or the lower regions very much, but what is their best imitation of that weakness, comes from the air, therefore he was still all little beastie and not a bit bulldog.

HE FOUND himself looking upward at a bird. But that is only as much as one should say when speaking of Napoleon: "Behold this soldier!" and it conveys nothing.

Nor was his aspect that way exactly, either. He found himself looking at an eye, one eye only, birds being built peculiarly. And he beheld wings, narrowand slightly curved, which shadowed out on either hand for goodness knows how far, like the vans of an avion and like them they never, never seemed to move. There was also a beak, and that looked as if it had a bloodstain just at the very end, underneath that nasty looking sharp hook, but the blood was always there, being color merely and not gore.

The polecat did not know that for the first time in his life he was interviewing a great black backed gull.

Nor did it matter anyway. He had no need to inquire further. The look of the brute was enough for him. It required no deep thinking to guess that trouble envelopes the great black back like a halo. He glories in it, lives by it, is born in it and, one can only hope, dies intimately connected with it.

The polecat did not so much quit that vicinity as cease to be there. He had,

however, a tough proposition up against him, and very short legs on him. Wherefore the mighty gull just flickered his vast vans a bit, slid forward, effortless, and at the rate of knots slid for fifty yards. Fetching round again, he hung, lifting and falling a little above the galloping, rippling beast, low down and facing him, fixing him with that awful cold stare.

"I'm Great Black Back," he explained aloud, gutturally and harsh, but nevertheless unmistakably enough. "I'm Great Black Back! I'm Great Black Back!" And he settled, with some mighty swaying and tacking and hacking, about twenty yards in front of the polecat.

The polecat stopped dead, back arched, face beginning to work like the face of a devil angered.

And the great gull's mate settled. It was astonishing how she had managed to drift up from nowhere, unnoticed, beside her spouse.

The long, coarse fur sat up all round the polecat's back. He arched his back still further. His face became more like the face of a Notre Dame devil than ever.

But he was as dumb as death, and that was a warning.

Now the great black backed gull—he is whiter than the driven snow, all the rest of him—is used to finding easy victims. In fact, as far as I can see, he lives largely by open and totally unashamed highway robbery. If you are a bird you don't see much use in arguing with another bird not far short of a yard long, nearly two yards across the wings, arrayed in all the panoply of war, daring, insolent, devoid of heart or soul, and flying like a veritable godling.

Thus the great black back has come to expect pretty instant "hands up." Even the eagle, it is said, leaves him alone, and I know the peregrine falcon, who has little fear for the eagle, does so too, as a general working rule.

Then the male gull—at least, I suppose it was the male—stuck out his head, opened his beak as wide as it would appear to go and, uttering the most blood curdling war cry he could think of, ran forward at the polecat with his absurd little paddling run.

Behind him, just as if tied to him by about a yard of string, his mate duplicated his every movement.

They looked just like two clockwork birds worked by one engine, and were very funny to behold. But the demonstration was not meant to appear funny in the least. It was meant to look very terrible indeed, and to judge by the polecat's behavior, it did to him.

His back arched completely. His fur stuck out all over him like a lamp glass brush. His face became demoniacal, and he swore. Between his glistening white fangs he screamed imprecations. He was not at all little beastie now, but all lion, and would see these great birds very much farther before he would "up hands" to them, or twenty like them for the matter of that.

The gulls came straight on, running all the time, with heads stuck straight out, at an angle of forty-five to be precise, with beaks wide open, both exactly in duplicate, like things on wheels, to within two and a half feet of Fitch.

Then—well, then they stopped, closed their beaks, put up and back their heads, ceased speaking and, with something that appeared to the onlooker like more than a hint of apprehension, walked slowly away. Simply bluff, you see; all bluff and —it hadn't worked.

And that's just the wild all over: one-third bluff, one-third bluffed, and the other third—mystery.

AFTER that the polecat removed to the island for which he had been making as quickly as dignity would allow. He had no desire to keep in the company of those professional bluffers with the awful stare any longer.

One never knew when the bluff might cease, and besides he may have felt within him that had the lion part of him not come up at the moment it did, he might by a miracle have reached that island alive, but the chances would have been

very much against his getting there with both of his eyes.

Still, I won't say if this was why the polecat shivered as he curved and licked himself dryer under a piled heap of boulders five minutes later, or if it was owing to the appalling cold of the wind and rain, but good right had he to shiver and make grimaces out at the pestilential day.

In the wild they sleep, as they live, for granted.

We may have no doubt that they dream, or show all the signs of so doing. The polecat rolled himself up and slept for hours, without, one presumes, dreaming, and when he awoke it was so suddenly and completely as to give the impression that he had never really been to sleep at all. They can do this too, in the wild. We can not.

It may have been the dry, harsh rustling of feathers of the Iceland falcon, and he looked very beautiful because he was large and thoroughbred looking and appeared quite white from a distance, that awoke our friend Fitch. Or it may have been the sounds in the air.

Fitch heard the falcon and peered up at him between the boulders, and elected not to go out just yet and, by the same token, to see what the sounds in the air meant. They were very terrible.

Mountains might have been falling to pieces if there had been any within many miles to fall, which there were not. An earthquake might have been taking place, if there had been any earth tremors, which there were not.

All the same it was terrifying beyond measure. Awful. The whole air seemed to be filled with rendings and roarings and crashings and splinterings, poundings, thunderings and cataclysmal upheavals.

The polecat crouched. He could do naught else.

He was all little beastie again, for the terrestrial wild folk—as distinct from the aerial—are so very, very helpless when Nature gets into her tempers and tantrums, as helpless as man.

Still, the Iceland falcon kept there and, though an enemy, the polecat may have felt that even he was better than nobody at all.

Then after a certain time he was gone, departing with that delightful instant power of not being, so peculiar to the birds and beasts.

The polecat gave him ten minutes to get well clear, then prowled forth.

He found himself among barrens and ridges and hollows, clothed thinly with stiff, glaucous grass, dotted with boulders, some pebbles, a little seaweed here and there, and more sparsely with heaps of boulders, and nothing else.

The grass would hide the low beast—except from above of course—unless he sat up, or raised his head on his long neck. There was water, possibly from melting snow and ice, and the boulders and piles of boulders would afford instant cover almost. So far good.

And all the time the titantic sounds of terror filled the air. Suddenly the polecat was down, belly flat.

A bird was standing in front of him in the thin, spear-like grass, and was seen very indistinctly indeed. In fact, he would not have seen it at all, if the act of shifting one wing, which it had probably been cleaning, had not made a crisp snap which flashed to his ears as did the action to his eyes, instantly.

Followed a pause of minutes during which an Arctic tern shot over like a silver screaming meteor and failed apparently to notice both the motionless actors in the drama so close beneath.

One of the most amazing things after their suddenness is the way in which the wild things can remain passive, cut off, out of gear, call it what you will, for long periods. That polecat moved about as much as a woodchunk for ever so long, and so did the bird. (Birds, by the way, are ever better at this game than mammals, or what are known to five out of every ten people as animals, and it's a pity, to avoid confusion, that the term is not official.)

And then, before you could throw up your hands, things were all action. A

thing with wings, and feathery, got up almost under the polecat's nose and yelled. The polecat jumped as though he had been knifed, and the other bird, for the apparition with wings who had trusted to her resemblance to surroundings till her nerve gave way, was a bird too, promptly fell upon its back, and was, literally, unwell.

When you have dealt intimately with birds for some time you cease to be surprised at anything. The polecat had rather specialized in birds—when he couldn't get Northern hares, which were easier to circumvent—and he showed no surprise. But that marked his limit.

His thoughts would not run to anything much further, or else why on earth did he crouch and elaborately begin to stalk that bird just as if he were undiscovered?

Undoubtedly the bird was wounded, was—great Scott!—dead. There it lay, motionless, and the polecat seemed to think he had run up against a soft thing. But the soft thing rolled over when he was nearly within reach and lame, broken winged, choking in its death throes, tumbled and fluttered and fell about just ahead of the now excited polecat.

The end of that folly was the polecat standing stiff, staring steadfastly at a gull-like bird called a Buffon's skua sailing up with consummate grace into the teeth of the wind.

The eggs on the ground which had, of course, been the cause of all this bluff, were on the ground still where the first skua had risen, but the polecat was now at liberty to find them if he could.

Apparently he couldn't, however, for we find him ten minutes later feeding on a tern he had managed to stalk as it sat, or rather dumped among the grass on the sand, preening its pearl gray cape.

AS A RULE the polecat was what one might call a dainty diner, far more dainty indeed than the canines, or even the fastidious cats, but today, being famished, he ate well, under cover of a boulder, slept well under cover of two boulders and sallied forth to go back to the mainland some hours later, under cover of night—I did not say dark so there was no real cover about this nocturnal habit.

And all the time the noise as if the devil were grinding up the rocks in a gigantic stamp had been going on, nobody taking any notice, until the polecat arrived at the beach. Then he did take notice and stop at the same instant. He had to; he would have walked into the sea otherwise.

Followed a pause while our Fitch stared at ice blocks half as large as a house under water, masterless and floating in terrifying liveliness, and at sea water, green, restless and cold as ice. And about here the lion half of our polecat came up. He did not wait longer than a man might take to remove his jacket; then he waded in—and swam for it.

Polecats are far more aquatic beasts than most people appear to realize, but they are not seals, and the passage back to the mainland was the task of nothing less than a seal.

The polecat made about ten yards; and not without difficulty climbed up on the first ice slab. I think he had some hazy, mad project of leaping and swimming one from the other, but he might with as much safety have tried to ride a wood jam on a Japanese or Himalayan river. The ice block hit another with a jar that laid the polecat out flat and ran through him from nose to tail, and that ice block hit another, which cannoned into a fourth, which scrunched a fifth, which pounded against a sixth, which was butting full tilt with the northwest gale to help toward shore, where the whole of the solid weight of the river ice was sliding monumentally down to the sea, with the result that a solid wall of ice was forever rising up along a line where sea and river contested, and falling ever with the noise of falling cities.

The polecat was aware of his ice block turning over bodily, and then he quit thinking and went in for about the smartest thing in exercise he had ever believed

himself capable of doing. Diving for his life from the heaving mass above, he ran almost into a channel that next instant shut with the grinding of a portcullis, missed being brained by a flying chip weighing not more than half a hundredweight, declined with a fine side leap to be slashed up by a jagged knife point charging down upon him. But he slipped under one lively ice block, and over another, even as the two met a third and larger one which they mounted together and sat bodily down upon—while the polecat tucked up his heels and tail as he ran from the thud of the sitting block behind him; dodged the fall of an upreared pinnacle, leaped bodily a channel opening at his feet only long enough to have dropped him in and thundered again above his head. Not unsullied with partly washed bloodstains, dripping, wild eyed, snarling, or gibbering, and more dead than alive, he stranded, as much by good luck as design, I fancy, back upon the shore of the island again and, scrambling up a little way, collapsed flat on his belly, spreadeagled and heaving. He was beaten.

And there perforce we have to leave our bold explorer simply because there is nothing more to do. He could go no farther because he had gone too far already, and there was no more land to the continent ahead of him. He could not turn back, and so he remained. He is still there, I think. He was still there when I last saw the place; lying up among the piled up boulders when full fed, and raiding upon the waders that came to feed there when off duty from their nests on the mainland, upon the various ducks there by the same token, upon the numerous sea fowl there also to feed, or because their nests were there, upon eggs, and later upon young birds, while I have reason to believe that he frequently caught fish also.

The point, however, is that he will have to stop there till the sea forms again in the autumn a bridge of ice by which our polecat can again cross to the mainland, and depart, if he is not a fool, southward as quickly as he can go.

And that is the story of an Arctic exploration expedition among the beasts which did not succeed—one of those hundreds of unchronicled expeditions which must be taking place every year, and it is remarkable only in the fact that there is a strange resemblance between the history of this and that of many a fruitless expedition undertaken by man himself.

Beginning

The DARK ROAD

By HUGH PENDEXTER

CHAPTER I

A CHANGE OF RAIMENT

AS BEFITTING a Virginia Halwood, young Enos of that family was well mounted when he arrived at Cane's Tavern in one of the cove settlements along the Conococheague. In dress, however, he did not suggest landed gentry. His coat was worn and his breeches were of buckskin. His shirt was of hemp tow, and the only pretense at adornment he affected were the brass buckles on the heavy shoes. From round wool hat to footgear he appeared to be an impecunious traveler, fortunate enough to be splendidly mounted.

It was near sundown and the western ridge had abbreviated the daylight. The tavern loungers eyed him curiously, their gaze quickening as they observed the fine points of the sleek mare. Turning the animal over to a hostler, Halwood clumped into the low posted room and ordered his supper. The proprietor, a giant of a man with a spade of blue-black beard, sized him up with one sweeping glance and then shifted his gaze to the open window to inspect the mare.

A table was set in a corner of the barroom and, with a fringe of silent loungers watching him, the young man did ample justice to the fried chicken, corn bread, cherries preserved in sugar, and a silver flagon of cider.

"You fare better here than folks do in some of the towns I've passed through," Halwood remarked as he finished the meal.

"You are new to these parts," commented the landlord.

"A stranger, yes. I shall need a bed."

"I have one that makes a man sleep even if he be as wide awake as an owl."

"And I could sleep on the floor from weariness. I will see to my mare and turn in early."

The landlord's eyes narrowed. Some of the loungers grinned behind the young man's back. Combing his fingers through his heavy beard, the landlord said:

"The boy has taken every care of your nag. You needn't bother."

"It's no bother. And I'm rather fussy about the little lady."

With that he quit the low room and went to the horse hovel.

No hostler was in sight. Halwood opened the door and found the shelter empty. Turning back, he looked about for another shelter. There was none. When he reentered the barroom he sensed the sharp scrutiny of the loungers. Walking up to the landlord, he announced—

"My mare's gone."

"Gone?" repeated the landlord, his eyes widening. "But that ain't possible."

"See for yourself," Halwood advised sharply.

"If your nag's gone then some skunk stole her," said the landlord, as he made for the door. "I ain't responsible for anything left outside the tavern."

"You charge for the keep of a guest's horse?"

"Not if it's took by some skunk," Cane replied over his shoulder, as he went forth to investigate. Halwood caught the

A Stirring Novel of Revolutionary Days

sound of a smothered laugh behind him. "My name's Cane," the landlord continued as he advanced toward the empty hovel. "These be dangerous times. Men have to run risks in traveling. I'm not responsible for any property outside the tavern."

"You've said that before, but I want that mare back before morning, Cane. I'm in a hurry to continue my journey."

"Yes? Well, if the mare's gone you'll have to do the next best thing; buy another. Where you bound for?"

"Bucks County, Pennsylvania," shortly replied Halwood, his face burning with anger. "And you can't slide out of your responsibility as a tavern keeper as easily as that."

Cane halted and turned to stare at his guest.

"Got friends in Bucks County?"

"Distant relations, if it's any of your business. I want that mare back."

"What relations you got in Bucks County?" persisted the landlord.

"Damn your questions! The Doanes."

Cane stared at him sharply for a moment, and then civilly asked—

"Have you anything to prove it?"

"I don't have to prove it. I don't see as it's any of your business. I've been robbed while your guest. One of your men, or your loungers, must have done it."

Cane showed no resentment at this plain language. He quietly explained:

"The Doanes are well known down here. No thief would dare rob you if he believed you was a connection of that family. I never see you in this valley before, and the Doanes come and go quite often."

"I've been in England the last two years. Here! Read that and then get about the business of finding the mare."

Halwood produced and thrust into Cane's hand a sheet of writing. Cane laboriously spelled out:

> Dear kinsman: We are pleased you can and will come to teach our school. I have heard my grandfather in his lifetime speak of your grandmother, who was a Doane. I trust you will come soon and have an easy journey.
>
> —NANCY DOANE

Mumbling profanely in his beard, the landlord wheeled about and hastened back to the barroom. The moment he was across the threshold he announced:

"That stolen Doane critter must be back in the hovel before morning, unhurt, or the thief will answer to me." Then he assured his guest, "Your nag will be waiting for you, sir."

What had been half concealed smiles of derision instantly faded. When the landlord finished there was a general exodus, all but one man leaving the room. Halwood sat down beside this man while the landlord hurried to the back of the house.

"You're a Doane, mister?" greeted the stranger.

"My grandmother was. You've been ill?"

THE QUESTION was prompted by the wildness of the man's eyes. He was seated in a corner, as if fearing a draft, a long rifle standing upright between his knees. His hair, streaked with white, added to the suggestion of physical weakness.

"I'm Edward Marshall," murmured the man, his gaze shifting quickly from window to window.

"Marshall! The man who made the 'Long Walk', and got the land from the Indians?"

"I got five pounds from the agents for the Penn family. I walked fifty-five miles in eighteen hours. I didn't run a step. That story's all bosh. The surveyor-general and the sheriff, and others, were along. But the Injuns think I stole their land. They've been after me ever since. Captured my poor wife and killed her on Broad Mountain. Now they've come back from the Ohio to Tinicum—to get me. Why didn't they get the Penn agents?"

He ceased speaking, pricked up his ears and glared at the open window. There was a slight noise outside. The long rifle was caught up and cocked. Then the butt of the gun struck the floor and Marshall, in a weak voice, was saying:

"It's only a hoss. Maybe it's yours."

Halwood stepped to the window and beheld the mare. A boy ran up, took the animal by the mane and called out to Halwood:

"Your critter got loose, mister. Wa'n't shut in tight enough."

"Shut her in tight this time," warned Halwood.

As he resumed his seat Marshall whispered:

"They're scared of the Doanes as much as I be of the Injuns. You mind if I travel with you to Bucks County?"

Halwood did mind. He had no desire to court assassination at the hands of red men because of being in Marshall's company. He replied, however:

"Glad of your company . . . Why do folks fear the Doanes? I recently re-

turned from England, where I went before this war started, to visit some Durham Halwoods. I've never seen any of the Pennsylvania Doanes."

"They be masterful men," said Marshall slowly. "It ain't healthy for any one to cross 'em. They're Tories, you know."

"So I've understood."

"You're Tory, of course."

"Not exactly. Nor am I Whig. Every man has a right to do his own thinking."

"Seems if you'd have to be one or t'other," mused Marshall.

"I feel like a man who stands at one side, watching things happen."

"Old man Doane was a Quaker. Fine man, too."

"His sons are fine men, aren't they?" probed Halwood.

Marshall hesitated a trifle, then said:

"Surely they be. Such fine, upstanding men. Such fine horsemen! I've seen Moses, the leader, jump a six-bar gate as easy as you'd hop over a stool. You'll probably get into the fighting?"

"I don't know. I don't like such personal questions."

"Of course. But you'll hear them many times."

Halwood was ruffled, but believed he must make some explanation. He went on:

"I was against the war when it started. I abhor the thought of bloodshed. Seems to me that a little give-and-take would have settled everything without any war. It's a terrible business. I don't know what I shall do. But I have the greatest admiration for General Washington . . . I'm riding early. Be ready if you want to go along with me."

Halwood was greatly disturbed when he retired that night. He had great affection for his kinsmen in England. His two years there had been most happy. With plenty of money he had traveled and lived well, and met nothing but the kindliest hospitality. It was very terrible that such pleasant relations must be shattered. That night, although he had a comfortable bed, he slept poorly. Indians whooped through his dreams, seeking Marshall; and a weak Congress was busily placing stumbling blocks in the path of Washington. With the first light, feeling more weary than he had upon retiring, he was up.

He found the table spread before a cheerful blaze in the fireplace. Cane in person waited on him. His mare, saddled and well groomed, stood outside the door. When he came to settle his bill Cane waved a hand and said—"Let's say you was my guest."

"Certainly not! How much?"

"In paper money, call it an even ten dollars."

"And in hard money?"

"Oh, twelve pence."

Halwood passed over the shilling and mounted. Cane followed him outdoors, saying—

"Wish you wouldn't let any of your connections git the wrong idea about the mare wandering."

"You mean just the opposite. You want them to get the wrong, not the right, idea. But I have her back; I'm satisfied. Edward Marshall was traveling with me. I don't see him, and I can't wait."

"He went on ahead, sir. You'll overtake him. He won't travel alone very far. Scared to death of Injuns."

A man came riding from the north, his horse in a lather. Halwood backed out of the rough road. The rider had no intention of passing, however. He came to a plunging halt, his beef-red face a-sweat with excitement. Although close to the landlord and the departing guest he lifted his voice in a hysterical yell to proclaim:

"Gineral Howe's left the head of the Elk! By this time he must be in Philadelphia!"

"By God, that's sweet news! Come in and drink! Bar's free!" excitedly cried Cane.

"Washington's scared out of his boots!" roared the courier for good measure.

"You're a damned liar!" barked Halwood. "Washington's a Virginian. He doesn't scare."

The man held his breath, his eyes bulging. In a paroxysm of rage he yelled—

"You white livered Whig skunk!"

He jumped his horse alongside of Halwood's mount and lunged to tear the Virginian from the saddle. Halwood's arms closed about his neck, and with a heave of his shoulders and a surge low to one side, he whipped the man across the mare and sent him flying headlong into the dirt. The fellow struck heavily and lay still.

"You've broken his neck!" cried Cane.

"No. He struck flat. Knocked the wind from him."

"Ride on. I'll see to him," growled Cane.

"I'll bide a bit. He's spoken evilly of a great American. I'll mend his manners, or break his neck."

"But you don't have no truck with rebels. You're going to the Doanes. They're all King's men."

"I can admire a great and good man, no matter on what side he fights. Toss that bucket of water on the lout's head."

THIS treatment was not necessary, as the bringer of news gasped and groaned and came upon his hands and knees. Nor was there any fight left in him. When he could stand he staggered into the tavern, leaving Cane to secure his horse.

"Well, you have the brusk Doane way with you," said the landlord. "I give you a pleasant journey."

"May your guests never lose any horses," gravely replied Halwood; and he lifted the mare into a gallop and sped up the rough road.

He saw nothing of Marshall until the latter suddenly stepped from behind a tree, his face haggard with apprehension. In a low voice he greeted—

"Did you see it?"

Halwood clapped a hand on his saddle holster and quickly gazed about. He saw nothing but the beauties of the perfect September day.

"That smoke in the west!" whispered Marshall, as if fearing to be overheard.

Halwood stared at the western ridge and finally picked out a thread of smoke.

"What of it?" he impatiently queried.

"Injuns!" whispered Marshall. "Trailing me!"

"Then they've lost the trail by quite a few miles. Let's travel."

"I'd go back to the tavern, only Cane would hand me over to them Delaware devils if they showed up in force."

"I don't think the Indians will ever catch you, but I do believe you'll worry yourself to death."

"They murdered my wife on Broad Mountain. They're after me. They've been in Tinicum looking for me. In Noxamixion, too. The army's the only safe place for me."

Halwood spoke to his mare and cantered along. Marshall, whose swift, tireless feet had done such good service for the Penns, and had cost him his wife, loped unwaveringly along. Halwood emerged from his meditations and decided that his companion could run the mare off her feet in a trial of endurance. He lessened his pace and made some inquiries about the country. Keeping up his stride, and seemingly without any effort, Marshall told him—

"Most the women folks in this State—"

"Colony," corrected Halwood.

"—ain't had a new cap or gown since the fighting at Lexington, and have been using pounded corn for flour. Hard to get any tea, coffee, sugar, spice, or any such fixings."

"Virginia is feeling the pinch," said Halwood.

"General Washington ain't been back home since the war started."

"He's a great man, perfectly sincere. New England got us into this mess— Ah, here comes one who hasn't felt the pinch of the times."

Marshall was quick to spot the horseman, rounding a bend and bearing down on them at a mad gallop. Halwood frowned at the reckless approach and took to the side of the road. The horseman came to a plunging halt, whipped out a pistol and cried:

"Drop that rifle, Marshall! Slide off that mare, young man!"

The man was richly attired; in truth, too finely for traveling. There was lace at the sleeves and the throat of his cambric ruffled shirt. In the bosom of the shirt flashed a brilliant brooch. His suit was rateen trimmed with feather velvet and gold buttons. The entire effect of his dandyism was topped by a gold laced hat.

Halwood stared into the reckless, yet prepossessing face, and was amazed to find the man's outrageous demand had not enraged him. He remembered the efficacy of Nancy Doane's letter, and said:

"I am on my way to Plumstead, near Doylestown, in Bucks County, to teach school. I have some kin there—the Doanes. I do not intend to make you a present of my mare."

"'Sdeath!" theatrically exclaimed the bandit. "How do I know that?"

"Don't get nervous and shoot and I'll prove it."

As he spoke Halwood slowly thrust his hand inside his pocket and produced the letter. With the muzzle of the pistol aiming between his eyes he extended the missive. The man snatched it and, alternating his glances between his prospective victim and the paper, managed to absorb its contents.

Returning the letter, he put up his pistol, swept off his hat and good-naturedly said:

"Just my damnable luck! Tell your kinsmen that Captain FitzPatrick, of Chester County, sends his compliments. But I always shall regret that mare. You look like a hobbledehoy on a gentleman's mount."

Halwood flushed under his tan and countered—

"I have not yet taken to the highways for my clothing." Then he stared appraisingly at the captain's rich dress. They were of about the same height and build. Halwood went on, "My clothes don't match my mount. I know that. My circumstances were excellent until the war ruined me. I worked my passage over in a privateer from France two months ago, after being away for more than two years."

"What the devil, my rustic young friend, does your history have to do with me?" demanded the captain. "I was whipped while a soldier in the American army, and my back still smarts—gossip for gossip. My most polite regards to Mistress Nancy Doane. Now I must be faring farther."

"You are not quick of wit. I said my clothes do not match my mount. Twice in less than twenty-four hours I have nearly lost this mare. Now I'll wager the mare against your clothes that I can pin your shoulders to the ground. If I lose I walk."

For a long count of ten the captain stared at Halwood, then vaulted to the ground, crying:

"Damn me! Done and done!"

Halwood dismounted more leisurely and requested Marshall to hold the mare. Delighted as a boy over a new prank, FitzPatrick threw off coat and besprigged waistcoat. Halwood insisted:

"The shirt, please. I don't want any of my property damaged."

"Well, strike my guts! The shirt comes off. The brooch goes with it if you win. I may break your neck, but I always shall love you."

Stripped to the waist the men faced each other on a smooth plat beside the road. Halwood suggested—

"No gouging, if you agree."

"Clean wrestling of a certainty. Now I am coming!"

FitzPatrick leaped forward with tigerish ferocity, but Halwood flashed aside and, with his right arm inside his opponent's extended left, he had him over his hip and crashing to the ground as quickly as one could snap thumb and finger. Instantly the captain was on his stomach and attempting to rise. Halwood dropped upon him and yanked the right arm backward and upward. The captain threw his legs wide to escape from being turned. The pressure on the imprisoned arm continued and, slowly but surely, it was forced higher until the pain became

excruciating. With a groan, FitzPatrick threw himself on his side in a wild endeavor to free his arm. There followed a blur of threshing limbs; and then Marshall, forgetting the fear of red vengeance for a moment, beheld the scourge of Chester County flat on his back, his shoulders in the dirt.

"Have done, damn you!" gasped the captain.

Halwood leaped to his feet and helped his opponent to rise.

"You never could work that again," panted the captain.

"There are several other tricks I should try first," said Halwood.

The captain smiled sourly, flexed his arm to make sure no ligaments were torn loose, and said:

"There are our disrobing and dressing rooms. Come."

He stepped out of the trail and behind some chokecherry bushes and removed the remainder of his garments. These he tossed over the bushes to Halwood, who, likewise, delivered his coarser apparel. When the two returned to the road Marshall almost smiled. Especially did the round wool hat make the loser appear ridiculous. FitzPatrick blinked his eyes as he beheld the vast improvement in Halwood's appearance. With an oath he sent the wool hat into the bushes and exclaimed:

"At least I don't have to wear that damn cage! Please remember to tell Mistress Nancy I send her my compliments. Lord! How she will laugh when she hears about this!"

"From aught I say they will think I wore these clothes from Virginia," said Halwood.

"Generous of you," sighed FitzPatrick. "But it happens I visited the Doanes and wore that rig just before setting out to find a good horse. Now I must be pushing my luck hard; for I swear night shall not find me a ploughboy."

With that he swung into the saddle, grinned a bit sheepishly, lifted his horse into a mad gallop and thundered south.

CHAPTER II

THE DOANES

MARSHALL did not lose his uneasiness while he and Halwood were west of the mountains. Out of pity for the man's obsession, Halwood held the mare down to a moderate gait until he discovered that his companion seemed to possess tireless legs. From Marshall he learned that the faint trail back of the mountains was used by the free traders in traveling to Virginia and the Carolinas.

"With whom do these men trade?" asked Halwood, as they made a camp under a projecting shelf of rock.

"Horse dealers and stealers. Now that the redcoats must be in Philadelphia, there will be some rare profits. In hard money. Your relations will feather their nests finely."

That evening they were aroused by a horseman riding south. Halwood hailed him while Marshall stood behind a boulder, his long rifle ready. The man reined in but refused to pause, as he intended to ride for the greater part of the night. He brought news of the fighting at the Brandywine and Germantown. For good measure he added—

"All of Howe's horses died during the voyage from New York, and there's a rare market in Philadelphia for anything on four legs."

"And you're in a hurry to take your profits?" said Halwood.

"Not being a fool, I am. I sell horses. I'll sell to the Yankees if they can pay in hard money; but they haven't any and can't get any. I'd sell to the devil if I got my price. Howe's in Philadelphia for the winter, and there will be high doings."

Halwood felt no sense of loyalty to the Northern Colonies. He blamed them for precipitating the war. Virginia's relations with England had been pleasant. For many years the Halwoods had sent their famous Orinoco tobacco to the mother country and, in return, had obtained many luxuries. Yet the thought of a Virginian making a losing fight did not

set well; and he considered Washington to be the greatest of all Virginians.

The last night before passing through the ridge into Bucks County Marshall had an Indian fright and remained awake until daylight. As a traveling companion he had his drawbacks; and Halwood was glad to part with him once they were clear of the ridge and riding east toward Plumstead. Following the Doylestown road, he reached that village, perched on a hill, at midday. He paused only for a hurried dinner. The landlord told him—

"You're the spit image of Cap'n Fitz-Patrick, over in Chester County."

"I resemble that gentleman?"

"Not only in looks, but your clothes. You dress just like him."

"The captain has a fine taste in clothes," said Halwood gravely.

Clear of the town he allowed the mare to take her ease. Now that he had all but arrived he felt downcast. Being young and vigorous, and not disliking adventure, the picture of teaching school appealed as being prosaic, almost stultifying. Possibly he was a trifle homesick. He was allowing the mare daintily to pick her way down the long slope when his moody gaze discovered what promised to be an accident. Ascending the grade was a small chaise, or chair, and the horse was fractious. He glimpsed a bonneted head in the vehicle. He spoke to the mare and shot down the slope as the horse began threshing about and kicking. As he drew close he saw the vehicle part company with the steed and start rolling down the hill.

With a rush Halwood was abreast of and by the chair; was out of the saddle just in time to seize the broken thills. With one twist he turned the wheels off the road and into the bank. The jar of the collision jerked the bonneted head violently, and one of the thills came apart in his hand. His face reddened as he glanced down and saw that the slim shaft had been mended, probably on the road, with the young woman's garters.

He advanced to assist her, but she refused his hand and hopped out and surveyed the damage in disgust. She was dressed in chintz and was most attractive. She took no particular notice of him at first, her eyes being on the horse. which started to run away, then decided to stop and graze. Swinging about, the maid gave Halwood closer attention, and her dark eyes for an instant sparkled with recognition, then revealed perplexity.

"I thank you for your service," she said, and made a little curtsy. "For a moment I thought you were some one I knew."

Her gaze remained puzzled as she inventoried his dandified apparel.

"I'll fetch back your horse. I may be able to mend those shafts," said Halwood.

"No, no. Leave the thing. If you'll bring the horse I'll ride him back home."

"Let me place you on the mare and I'll ride the horse," he insisted.

She appraised the mare with appreciative eyes and nodded her head; and before he could assist her she had swung up and was seated sidewise in the saddle. He went after the horse and leaped on his back and returned. He asked—

"You live near here?"

"Quite close. Plumstead Township."

"Then you may be my guide. I'm riding to Plumstead."

"You have friends there?"

"Some distant relatives. The Doanes."

"Can it be that you're a school teacher?" she cried eagerly.

"I am to be one. But how could you guess?"

"Why, you can't be Enos Halwood!"

"But I am." He leaned toward her, stared between the bonnet flaps and countered, "By any hap are you a Doane?"

Flashing her teeth in a bright smile, she nodded.

"I wrote you about the school. I'm Nancy Doane. But you're not dressed like a schoolmaster. I thought to see a man with a long, sharp nose. Yet I vow you remind me mortally of some one."

He laughed, then became a bit confused and awkwardly explained:

"I'm sailing under false colors, Mistress Nancy. I am poor. I started my journey dressed like a ploughboy, but I met a man who took a fancy to the mare. We made a wager. I kept the mare and won his rich clothes."

"God's mercy for the two of us! I knew it! I knew it! It's like can't been seen outside of Philadelphia. It's richer than what my brothers wear. It's Captain FitzPatrick's suit! But how? Why?"

She would not be denied, and Halwood was forced to describe his meeting with the doughty captain. She laughed until tears came. Suddenly her mood shifted, she sobered, and her gaze became overcast. With a little frown she said, as if arguing with herself:

"A man must be a man in these times. And yet the times are horribly out of joint. My brothers have rough manners, but take no offense. They will mean kindly by you."

"Any of them young enough to go to school?"

He hoped for a negative.

"The two younger ones," she said. "But they shall give you no trouble. I'll see to that."

"No, no, Mistress Nancy. If I teach school I must run it. I'll only ask you to advise me as to where I shall live."

"Lor! Live? Would a kinsman, no matter how remote, live anywhere except at the Big House?"

SO THEY talked as they traveled along, each spying on the other and thereby becoming better acquainted. The girl was exquisitely feminine, and yet, possibly because of her several brothers, she had the frankness of a boy. Halwood highly approved of her long before they reached the cluster of commodious cabins and the two frame houses which constituted the Doane settlement in Plumstead. She dismounted at the Big House, and a hostler promptly came to lead the animals away. Then she led the way into a big living room, where five men of powerful physique, and as richly dressed as if about to attend a fête, were playing roulette, with the wheel placed among the dinner dishes. Not only were they gambling, but were wagering gold pieces.

On glimpsing Halwood the game was halted, and the Virginian became the cynosure of all eyes.

"By the Lord! I don't know who you are, but you wear your clothes well!" exclaimed a powerfully built man.

"Brother Moses, this is Enos Halwood, who comes to teach the school. Cousin Halwood, this is Moses, who is leader of our tribe. And here are Joseph and Isaac, and Abraham and Mahlon. You'll fix their names when you get better acquainted. Now clear away that rubbish of a game so we can eat."

"You have a sweet taste in clothes. But schoolmasters—" began one of the younger brothers.

The girl interrupted, explaining—

"He bested FitzPatrick in wrestling, wagering his mare against the captain's new suit."

A prodigious roar of laughter greeted this announcement. Halwood detected skepticism, especially in the bearing of the one called Isaac. Nancy Doane shooed them clear of the board, and with her own hands placed the remnants of a roast on the table and half of a noble pudding.

Halwood, feeling out of place, seated the maid and sat opposite her, and fell to eating. He knew she had had her dinner, although she made a great pretense of being hungry. He was uncomfortable as he felt the impact of five pairs of eyes. When the repast was finished Moses produced a pitcher of rum, mixed a drink for himself and demanded:

"We want the straight of this business with FitzPatrick. You mean you beat him fairly?"

"Damnation! Would I beat him unfairly?" demanded Halwood angrily.

Moses smiled and played with the rich lace at his wrists.

"No offense meant, kinsman," he murmured. "But we find it hard to believe

that the captain failed to hold his own."

"I found him a courteous fellow, although at first he asked for my mare at the muzzle of his pistol."

"Knowing who you were?" Now Moses' voice rumbled like thunder rolling through a mountain notch.

"He didn't know me, of course. Being *in extremis* if I lost the mare, I showed him Mistress Nancy's letter. He was very polite. The business would have dropped then and there had I not developed as strong a liking for his clothes as he had felt for the mare. I suggested that we wrestle, the mare against his outfit."

Isaac laughed ironically. Halwood turned and said:

"How else could I get them? You seem to be a misbeliever. You laughed that same way a few moments ago."

"Maybe I did, my sweet Virginia cousin. I can't best the captain in a wring, but I can pin your gay coat to the floor."

Halwood promptly stood, pushed back his chair and removed his coat. Then he asked:

"Where do you want to fall? In here or outdoors?"

"Curse your boasting! You'll fall here."

Nancy started to speak, but Moses' big hand roughly smothered her voice. To Halwood he said:

"You really invited it. But Isaac is our best at wrestling."

"That's well. I want to begin at the top and have it over with," said Halwood. "Cousin Isaac, I'm waiting."

In a thrice the young man had shed his coat and waistcoat, and had removed a double handful of guineas from his breeches pockets. Halwood noticed he gave the gold into his sister's keeping. Then he was mincing on tiptoe toward the Virginian.

He gave an Indian whoop and pushed the table against the wall; and the two came together. There was a wild flurry of arms and legs, and a crash, and Isaac was on his back, the breath knocked from his lungs. Moses laughed in his deep bass voice, clamped two powerful hands on Halwood's shoulders and cried:

"Cousin Halwood, none of this family will wrestle you again. That was a fairish trick you used."

"Simply a matter of leverages. I picked up several such notions while in England."

Moses nodded and, in a voice his brothers had learned to obey, warned:

"You boys have heard me. No more wrestling with Halwood . . . Cousin, I'm riding to Philadelphia. Ride along with me. Your school can wait."

Moses, Joseph and Isaac rode to town, taking along a dozen horses. Halwood felt bewildered by his new experiences. He marveled at the Doanes' daring when, near Norris Town, he saw a placard on a tree which offered three hundred pounds for the head of any of the five brothers. The notice further announced the Doanes were guilty of robbing the county treasurer of all the county funds. With a terrific oath Moses tore the reward notice down and declared:

"I'll scalp the skunk who posted that if I can learn his name. Robbery? In time of war a King's man takes all the rebel funds he can find. They next will be offering blood money for our heads because we counterfeit their filthy paper money." Then his mood changed and he laughed uproariously. When he could control his voice he told Halwood, "Our counterfeit passes on par with their paper even when it's known to be bogus. Here, cousin, have some. The more we put into circulation the less theirs will buy."

He handed over a thick packet of bogus bills. One of the enemy moves against the thirteen States was to further debase the rapidly depreciating paper money by flooding the country with bogus bills.

Halwood was unable to suppress a little grimace of distaste as he accepted the fat sheaf of bills that Moses offered him. These loud cousins of his were a strange lot . . .

HALWOOD grew nervous when they arrived at Philadelphia; but there was no hindrance to their entering. Moses led the way to the City Tavern. He left his brothers to guard the horses while he and Halwood went inside. Halwood came upon a scene of gaiety and abandonment. A roulette wheel was surrounded by young subalterns, who, taking pattern after General Howe and his staff, were ruining themselves at high play.

Moses left Halwood by the gaming table while he disappeared in search of a quartermaster.

"You're a gay looking buck, my provincial. You don't dare to play?" said the operator of the wheel.

"I have nothing but some Colonial paper money. I'll wager it at two for one," said Halwood.

"You may play," crisply said the operator.

"You're green," chortled a beardless cub. "The rate just now is one and three-fourths to one."

"Two for one at this wheel," sharply corrected the proprietor.

Halwood produced his bogus money and, after watching the game a bit, he began to wager six and eight-dollar notes. From the gossip around the table he learned that any single number, or upon the green, paid thirty-five for one. He placed his wagers recklessly and after losing half his notes he began to get some back. Adhering to his policy of seeking big odds, he soon had recovered all his paper money and began to receive silver and a few gold pieces. It was beginner's luck, and he put down the paper bills in larger piles.

He ceased playing when he beheld Moses Doane coming from a back room in company with an officer. The latter went outside and had a man hold a lantern while he examined the horses. He took them all and paid in gold, and urged the elder Doane to bring in some more.

Moses introduced Halwood to several officers and spoke highly of his zeal for the British cause. Each time this happened wine was poured, and in self-defense Halwood stepped aside at the first opportunity and took to the street to cool his blood. And he needed time to straighten out his disturbing thoughts. He wandered the streets and came to the British Provost, as the Walnut Street prison was called. From a drummer boy Halwood learned that nine hundred men, captured at Brandywine and Germantown, were housed in the structure under the brutal charge of the notorious Cunningham, who had been brought from New York to indulge in new iniquities on the helpless.

Several of the prisoners were dangling little baskets from the barred windows, seeking for charity. After the drummer boy passed on Halwood dropped gold and silver coins in these, and as the word was passed among the inmates more receptacles were lowered, until the Virginian had sent up all the hard money he had won, or nearly three hundred dollars.

He passed on, wondering why he had such an itch to aid the enemies of England. He knew he must say nothing about his charity to the Doanes. He walked on, drinking in the cool air, and finally halted across from a house in Chestnut Street where officers were constantly coming and going. He asked a passerby to tell him who was quartered there. The man hesitated and suspiciously replied—

"You must be new to this city not to know that Lord Howe, General Howe's brother, has quarters there."

Then he hastened away, and Halwood sauntered along in the same direction. He halted on glimpsing a Scotch Highlander running toward him. He saw the man as he passed through a fan of light from a doorway. He stepped aside to avoid a collision.

The Highlander roughly seized him by the shoulder, yanked him up to a lighted window and yelled something Halwood did not understand. The grip on his shoulder seemed to be crushing the bone. To win clear he brought his knee against

the man's stomach, causing him to relinquish his hold. Then he swung his fist with all his might against the hard jaw and knocked the man insensible. Instantly he realized he was in for great trouble unless he escaped. He darted down a street, running on his toes, and continued his flight at random. An hour passed before he found himself opposite the City Tavern. Composing himself, he entered and found his kinsmen half-seas over and recklessly playing roulette.

He joined them as he beheld a sergeant entering from the street. The man's gaze was on him and he advanced in a very business-like manner. Halwood affected not to see him until he felt a rough hand on his shoulder. Then he whirled with much violence and swung the fellow against Moses. The latter roared in rage and picked up the intruder as if he had been a child and tossed him several feet to one side.

The man came back with a rush and an oath. The Doanes presented a solid front. There was much confusion, and the players scattered. The sergeant disentangled himself and yelled:

"I want that man. He struck one of our Highlanders!"

He was pointing at Halwood.

"Damn lie!" hoarsely shouted Moses. "We're the Doanes of Bucks County. This lad's my kinsman. He's been with me all the evening."

An officer emerged from an inner room. Coming up to the group, he asked—

"What's the matter here, Sergeant?"

"This man struck one of my Highlanders."

"Damn liar!" roared Moses. "He helped me bring down remounts for your army, sir."

"I remember, Mr. Doane. You brought us the much needed horses and plan to bring some more. Sergeant, I am Major André. You've made a mistake. Make no more disturbance here. "

The sergeant slunk away.

Young Joseph conducted Halwood to an open door and, grinning widely, said:

"Watch that very slim, very straight man eat. He commands the Hessians. He's General Knyphausen."

Halwood stared at the leader of the mercenaries.

"Now, watch," chuckled young Doane. "See him!"

"He spreads butter on his bread with his thumb!" murmured Halwood. "What a fancy!"

It was near daylight before Moses was ready to start for home. Halwood was weary, mentally and physically, and was glad to be riding.

"Where are your brothers?" he asked of Moses.

"We'll pick them up later." He happened to glance at Halwood's right hand and exploded, "How'd you knock the hide off your knuckles?"

"Hit a Highlander on the jaw after he began to treat me roughly."

Moses started violently.

"Damnation! They'd shot you offhand if I'd let them take you away! Be you a complete fool?"

"I'm free born and white. No overseas lout can manhandle me without having a fuss."

That was Moses' only surprise out of the trip. Halwood had his surprise when the missing brothers joined them six miles out. They were leading seven horses at a smart trot.

"Whose are those? And why didn't you sell them?" asked Halwood.

Moses grinned slyly.

"Got to crop their manes and do several other things to change their looks," frankly explained Moses. "Just some mounts the boys picked up on the streets while the owners were elsewhere. A month from now we'll take them in and sell them. Or else run them down behind the Blue Ridge and swap for others. Every one, including the officers, are getting the King's gold in several ways. The Doanes want their share. Fair enough, eh, cousin?"

And he chuckled as he read the amazement in Halwood's face.

CHAPTER III

HALWOOD'S EDUCATION BEGINS

NANCY DOANE pointed out the log house that served as a schoolroom and Halwood inspected it. The furnishings consisted of a table and a chair for the master, and several benches for the pupils. A big fireplace supplied warmth in cold weather.

When he returned to the Big House the girl told him he could open school as soon as he was ready.

"You will live here, of course," she added. "Moses will see about your wages. You will have several children from other families. You brought some books?"

"Only 'Cheever's Latin Accidence', and a book printed in Boston—'The Young Lady's Accidence', for English. I'll make a sum book for those who will study arithmetic."

"You look cast down. You're not discouraged?"

"It's not the school. I'll get along with that all right. I was thinking of those poor devils in the Provost on Walnut Street. Lowering little baskets of straw and cloth to get a few coins. The curse of war."

The girl's face went bleak. She nodded, but reverted to his work by saying:

"I wish I had thought to tell you to look up William Darrach on South Second Street. He's a schoolmaster. He could give you good advice."

"I'll go into town and talk with him. I must get me some other clothes. I'll have no trouble in entering and leaving the town, if I go alone?"

"Not if you carry a written line from Moses."

"I think I had better sleep outside the Big House," he remarked.

"If you prefer that," she told him; and he feared she was displeased.

"I might want to work evenings, and would need to have it quiet," he explained. Her comely face lighted with an appreciative smile. She said:

"You are very wise. The Big House is a bear garden for roughness." Then, soberly, "The younger boys shouldn't live in that atmosphere. Carousing and gaming. British officers will soon be paying us visits. I try to hold the children back, but they'll pattern after their elders."

She returned to her duties as housekeeper and he reentered the schoolhouse and commenced fashioning wild goose quills for those who would need to write. He heard steps at the door and glanced up to behold Marshall, the "long walker". As he entered the room Halwood noticed his gaze lacked none of its usual furtive expression. Halting in the middle of the room, he earnestly advised:

"Don't teach 'em surveying. Get 'em into trouble. Too many folks trying to steal land."

"I scarcely expect any of my scholars will take up surveying. You staying here?"

"For awhile. Never know how long I'll stop in a place. When I feel uneasy and find myself listening I know it's time to push on. May go away tomorrow, may stay for a couple of weeks. Simon Girty and his Injuns are raising Cain down on the Ohio. Hope the devils won't fare this far east."

With that he departed, accompanied by his haunting fears; and the schoolmaster set to work on his sum book. He followed the prevalent example of other schoolmasters and composed problems where fifteen figures would be multiplied by as many more, and sums in long division, with the dividends running into millions. He recalled one such sum he had worked on for three weeks when a lad, with no help or explanation, and he assumed it was the only way.

He kept busy until midday, when a bell summoned him to the Big House for dinner. As he approached the door he saw two British cavalry horses hitched to the rail, and he would have turned back had not Nancy appeared at the window and beckoned him to hurry. When he entered the large room his eyes and ears

quickly told him that the drinking had started early. A tall, dark faced man, with a sardonic cast of countenance, was shaking dice with Abraham Doane, and the other visitor, young, and with yellow curly hair, had reached a maudlin stage and was endeavoring to make love to Nancy. Halwood was hugely displeased that the girl should take the man's advances so goodnaturedly.

Turning to Halwood, she told the amorous one—

"This is our kinsman, Enos Halwood."

The dark man glanced toward Halwood, his eyes quick to take in the rich apparel. He remarked—

"I'd said it was the Duke of York."

"Egad! It's lucky he's a kinsman, and no rival," sniggered the blond young man.

As if not hearing the banter the girl said:

"Cousin Enos, this is Captain Long, of the Light Horse. And this is Captain Goode of the Grenadiers."

"You have a pretty taste, rack me if you haven't," said Goode. "You'll be joining us, I expect."

"I am a schoolmaster," Halwood answered.

"It should be a safe occupation," said Goode.

Captain Long exclaimed:

"Well, damn my liver! Schoolmaster! But your compensation must be large."

Halwood made no reply, but took his seat at the long table. The others did likewise, although Abraham and the captain continued with the dice between mouthfuls.

"Curse the luck!" roared Long. "The devil's in your dice! Let's double the stakes."

Abraham grinned, slowly shook his head and softly sang—

"Double, double, double-trouble."

Long's bearing became truculent. Nancy secured his attention by asking—

"Any news from town, Captain?"

"Arranging for a ball at the tavern. You must come. Cunningham is giving his prisoners a rare lesson in discipline."

"Cunningham," she repeated. "He's the one who hanged young Nathan Hale on Long Island, isn't he?"

"That young Nathan Snake! Yes—Damme!" The last as Abraham raked in the gold pieces.

So distasteful was the company that Halwood hurried through the meal and excused himself by claiming a pressure of work. Captain Long stared after him and called out harshly—

"You be careful, schoolmaster, to teach loyalty to his Majesty, the King."

"I shall endeavor to so teach as to give satisfaction to my scholars' parents," curtly replied Halwood; and he bowed to the girl and returned to his schoolroom.

The scene had sickened him. Long's arrogance infuriated him. He found himself pitying the captain's subordinates.

HE WORKED at his sum book doggedly, striving to convince himself he was not homesick for Virginia. Nancy Doane glided over the threshold so quietly he did not hear her. She was close to the table when he felt a presence and looked up. He was alarmed by the expression in her oval face. Fear was in her gaze.

"What's wrong?" he softly asked.

"I'm afraid of Captain Long," she whispered.

He came to his feet, demanding—

"Has he—"

"Afraid he and Abraham will quarrel," she broke in. "He has almost as much as said that Abraham cheats." Halwood believed the captain for once was right in his suspicions. "Abraham has had too much wine to be quick in understanding," she continued.

"Abraham will break his neck, and good riddance," growled Halwood. "Sit down and forget all about it. Rather slim shoulders, young lady, for bearing the responsibility of the whole world. The more I see of British officers, the less I like them. All of them rant about their superiority. They think the Colonists are so many dumb cattle."

"Long must be an exception," she defended.

"We'll hope so. Major André is gentlemanly mannered—I admit that much. Be seated."

"I can't. I mustn't. I don't know why I came here."

"You came because you needed help. I'll go up to the house—"

"No, no, no! That would make it worse. You're not an officer."

"Only a schoolmaster. Yet if I hear a fuss I'll come."

She hurried away, and Halwood tossed the sum book aside and scowled ferociously at the rough walls. And wherever he looked he could see only Captain Long's leering face. He found it impossible to work longer, but to return to the house, unless he went to smooth out a disagreeable situation, would be very distasteful. He rescued the sum book and mechanically resumed his task, writing down long columns which would give a total of billions.

A step sounded outside the door. This time his ears were alert. He glanced up just as Captain Long swaggered into the room. Without speaking, the officer approached to within three feet of the table and stood with his hands on his hips, smiling derisively. Halwood met his gaze without speaking.

"I just learned," drawled the captain, "how a schoolmaster happens to be dressed like a gentleman. It had puzzled me."

"Yes?"

"You found a gentleman in his cups and took advantage of his condition—"

"You are a liar!" It was said softly, almost a whisper.

Long gaped as if not understanding. Then his dark features writhed convulsively and, with a rare oath, he took a quick step forward and reached across the table to drag the offender from his stool. Fingers of steel clamped around the extended wrist and, with a quick jerk, Halwood had his man off balance and had hauled him halfway across the table. With his free hand Halwood snatched the sword from its sheath and tossed it aside.

Then he recovered his temper, released his grip and waited. The captain was choleric with rage. He tried to articulate, and could mouth only fragments of oaths. He appeared to be in danger of choking to death on his own venom. Panting like a spent runner, he finally managed to exclaim—

"You—you—you—"

When the epithet came the table was kicked aside, and with all his accumulated anger giving him strength, Halwood seized the captain by leg and shoulder and hurled him through an open window. Resting his hands on the sill, he warned—

"Come in here again and I'll throw you through the wall."

And he tossed the sword through the opening.

With an animal cry the captain picked up the weapon and ran to his horse. Halwood leaned over the sill and watched him. He had guessed correctly; the man meant murder. As Long yanked a long dragoon pistol from the saddle holster, Nancy Doane cried out in alarm from the Big House, and would have run from the doorway had not Captain Goode seized her and held her. The Doanes were staring stupidly; Abraham still held his fat bag of gold. The girl was screaming—

"Moses, stop him!"

Not until then did Halwood behold Moses, riding a big black like a thunderbolt, cutting in between Long and the schoolhouse. Without a word the head of the family flung himself from his horse and was blocking the captain's path. Long menaced him with his pistol and screamed for him to get out of his way. So suddenly one could scarce detect the motion Moses seized the madman's wrist and, with a twist, caused him to drop the weapon. Releasing the officer, Moses stepped back and said quietly:

"Now, Captain, what does this all mean? I'm the chief of this clan. I want this weapon explained."

"I'm going to shoot a skunk!" yelled Long.

Moses planted a big foot on the pistol and took time to glance toward the schoolhouse. He saw Halwood half over the sill. Instantly the broad face crinkled with amusement. Hooking an arm through that of the infuriated captain, he began talking in a low voice and compelled his prisoner to walk aside. The captain attempted to rave, but Moses produced a paper and held it up for him to read. In a low voice he said:

"You know Sir William's signature. You'll do as I say here in Plumstead, and do it with a smile, or be broke. Read that carefully. Orders are orders, Captain."

Long stared at the paper and read it twice; and then he fell to trembling. He surrendered and walked to his pistol and replaced it in the holster. Bowing low to Nancy Doane, he swung into the saddle and announced:

"Sir William must be obeyed. But at another time—in another place—"

He left the threat unfinished and cruelly dashed his spurs into the flanks of his mount and rode like a madman from the scene.

Captain Goode, reeling somewhat, managed to mount. He stared blankly around the half circle, then smiled in maudlin fashion as his gaze rested on the girl.

"You're coming to the ball," he reminded.

And, wearing his fatuous smile, he jogged along after his wild riding brother officer. With his departure Moses strode toward the cabin and gestured for all others to keep back. Storming into the room, he demanded—

"What the devil you mean by treating a King's officer like that?"

"What the devil does a King's officer mean by allowing himself to be treated like that?" hotly retorted Halwood. "And what was his notion in trying to bully me? I suppose you would stand and smile and let him abuse you?"

"I'd break his damn neck!" Then the thunder clouds suddenly vanished, and Moses was giving away to gargantuan laughter. When he could control his mirth he told his pale faced kinsman, "It's bad business. I can't blame you. The pup should not be rough with his betters. The Doane blood's in you, all right. But it makes things disagreeable. I had to show him Sir William Howe's private order for no officer to interfere with me, to prevent him from being killed, or killing you. Watch out that you don't find yourself alone with him, Halwood. He and his friends won't rest o' nights till they get you. That means Philadelphia is closed to you."

"To the contrary, Moses, I must go to town at the end of the week to call on a schoolmaster. Your pass will give me safe conduct."

"Aye. That it will," slowly agreed Moses.

"But it won't save you if they happen upon you on a side street. If you go you must make direct for the tavern and show Major André my written endorsement of you. If he isn't there you must remain until he comes. Tell him the whole story. He is a gentleman."

"The captain's cooled off a bit by this time," said Halwood. "He'll swallow his pride. He won't talk about what happened up here."

"I'll try to ride to town with you," decided Moses. "Even André can go only about so far with an officer."

"What good will your presence do? Have you more power than Major André?" asked Halwood curiously.

"General Howe will never side in with a mere Doane against one of his officers. But so long as he hopes Moses Doane can recruit an independent troop of light horse for the King he will not let any officer's anger prevent that recruiting. There must be a thorough understanding. Officers must feel perfectly free to come here and get drunk and gamble. I want them to. But there must be no more of this heaving folks through windows business."

"It's FitzPatrick's clothes," sighed Halwood. "One of my errands in town is to buy a soberish suit."

"Aye! That's it. Get something Quakerish. It'll show you to be a man of peace."

CHAPTER IV

THE EMPTY MANOR HOUSE

HALWOOD'S school opened with fifteen boys and girls, ranging from seven to fifteen years in age. All these pupils were children of Tory parents, and had absorbed that political faith. Six of the children were kin to the Doanes, two of the older boys being first cousins and living at the Big House. These lads had the brawn and overbearing manners of the Doane men, and had picked up many of their elders' reckless, swaggering ways. Their influence on the rest of the school did not make for discipline, as they boasted of kinship with the teacher and added that no teacher could give them orders.

When Halwood went to the Big House for the midday meal on that first day, he secured a moment aside with Nancy, and frankly told her—

"Those nephews of yours, Bart and Henry, are sure to make trouble in the school."

"I'll talk to them," she said quickly; and her eyes flashed with lights which boded no good for the young gentlemen.

"Oh, no," quickly protested Halwood. "I'm either running the school, or I am not. If not, you must get a new schoolmaster. Otherwise, I want to know I have the family behind me. I can't correct the Dobbs boy, and overlook the pranking of your nephews."

"Birch them!" urged Nancy. "Lord knows they need it. It's the eternal carousing and gambling that gets them in bad ways."

"Very well, young lady. I'm taking orders from you, and only you."

And Halwood smiled as one who entertains pleasant anticipations.

On the second day the quiet of the morning period was suddenly shattered by young Henry Doane seizing Bart Doane by the throat and tumbling with him to the floor. Halwood pulled them apart, picked up several gold pieces which they had dropped, and demanded an explanation.

Bart passionately cried:

"He cheated! He stole one of my guineas!"

"He lies!" hotly defended the accused. "He was shaking with loaded dice that he pouched from Uncle Abraham."

Halwood dragged Bart to the desk and briskly dusted his bottom with a hickory rod. At first the young man fought back, but quickly found he was prolonging his punishment. Releasing him, Halwood performed the same service for the other. Both youngsters gritted their teeth and made no outcry. They were first through the doorway at dinner time. When Halwood leisurely walked up to the Big House the news had preceded him.

Abraham, in the absence of Moses, posed as titular head of the family. He was quick to inquire:

"What's the matter, Halwood? My nephews have been whipped by you, I hear."

His tone indicated barely suppressed irascibility.

Halwood mentally thanked Nancy for remaining silent. He explained:

"Their gambling and fighting caused a great disturbance, besides setting a bad example for the rest of the children. Bart said Henry stole one of his gold pieces. Henry said that Bart was using your loaded dice."

With a roar of rage Abraham hurriedly left the room. When he returned his face was dark with passion.

"The damned young thief!" he exploded. "Break their necks the next time!"

"They got nothing worse than a whipping. There mustn't be any next time. I do not want any child bringing gold pieces to school."

Abraham was not in sympathy with this ruling. He insisted:

"They always carry a few coins in their pockets. Young folks should get used to carrying money."

"Not to my school," firmly insisted Halwood. "It's bad for the other children, who can't boast of a twopence."

With this first cloud pushed below the

horizon the deportment of the scholars was all that could be expected, in a time and place when dissipation ran riot openly among their elders, and while the public mind was being daily distracted by the news from the two armies.

On Friday afternoon Halwood announced his intention of visiting town and procuring a more sober suit of clothes. Moses, about to scour the country for cavalry remounts, wrote a few lines and handed it to his kinsman, saying:

"That'll pass you anywhere, if you call at the tavern and present it to General Howe's aide so it can be countersigned. You can leave word for Sir William that I shall bring a prime lot of nags very soon, as I am expecting three score to arrive from Virginia and North Carolina. I also shall pick up some around home."

Halwood smothered a smile as he remembered the animals stolen from Howe's army, and he wondered if these would be in the lot. Nancy followed him outside and, with a side glance to make sure they could not be overheard, said:

"I hear fearsome tales about the poor prisoners. Can you visit the Provost and get first hand information?"

"I will, if my pass will let me in."

"I can't believe all I hear from my brothers' talk. It sounds too wicked."

"I'll try to learn the truth."

He was in the saddle when Abraham ran out and handed him a package of Continental paper money, saying:

"See if you can work this off. It's better than what the Yankees are making."

Halwood accepted the money, a cursory glance satisfying him they were excellent imitations.

His journey was uneventful until he was crossing a small branch of the Neshaminy at Newtown. Then he discovered a storm was brewing—a black pall covering the heavens and sweeping in from the east. He stared ruefully at his fine clothes and decided he must seek shelter. The mare wished to run and he gave her her head and began his race against the approaching tempest. There was a thrill, akin to exultation, as he permitted the swift hoofs to compete with the onrushing wall of darkness. Urged on by the tingling desire to cheat the storm out of another mile, he passed house after house where he might have taken shelter. In this fashion he rode until within two miles of Bristol, by which time the black dome was roofing in the zenith; and he feared he had risked too much.

Then, off the road an eighth of a mile, he spied what appeared to be the walls of a commodious country place in a grove of chestnuts. He wheeled into the lane and raced toward it. The grass grown drive and the cluttered appearance of the grounds informed him that the place was deserted even before he came to the front of the house. Dismounting, with the mare following him like a dog, her nose nuzzling his shoulder, he gained the rear of the house and found a barn and several sheds. These outbuildings were in a dilapidated condition. He feared the storm might level them to the ground, and he knew the rain would find small hindrance in penetrating the leaky, broken roofs.

He tried a door at the bottom of a runway and found that it gave, with much groaning and squeaking of hinges, under the full force of his shoulder. He entered the cellar, the mare following him, and in the semi-darkness he found a small room, partitioned off with brick, which answered nicely for a stall.

Closing the outer door, he felt his way through the rapidly increasing darkness to a flight of stairs and mounted to the ground floor. Here the light was stronger, although rapidly lessening, and a short hallway led him into the cook room. The big fireplace contained a bake oven and in front of it was a spit. Somehow this room impressed him as having been recently occupied. The air was not stale, as it was in the cellar, and he even fancied he could detect the reek of tobacco smoke.

THE UNTRIMMED limbs of a tree raked across a window and gave him a rare start. For an instant he fancied some one was on the floor above. His questing gaze located a box of candles. He selected one and, with his flint and steel and some dry débris in the fireplace, he managed to secure a light. He was annoyed to find he was uneasy and that the cause seemed to emanate from the floor above. To end such silly notions he walked down the long hall and up the stairway. Again the unwholesome obsession returned to his mind; and he wondered why he should move stealthily. It suggested an expectation of finding a tenant.

In the first room he entered, a large chamber giving on the driveway, he discovered a gruesome dark stain on the floor. He made a rapid survey, finding it difficult to overcome the impulse to wheel about, as the weird fancy suggested that the stain was following him, that he would find it on the floor at his heels.

He hurriedly inspected the different rooms and was quick to note that vandals had been there, as chests and dresser drawers were opened and their contents were scattered on the floor. As he returned to the hall a gust of air from some broken window extinguished his light. At the same moment the rain, whipped on by the gale, struck with a crash, and the drumming of it on roof and windows was very loud.

Feeling his way downstairs, he returned to the cook room to relight his candle. It was growing dark outside. As he was groping his way to the fireplace he was abruptly halted by a cry that sounded like a human voice. With the storm making such a racket he could not decide whether the sound came from within or without the house; but in the back of his mind was the remembrance of the dark patch on the floor above.

He tiptoed to a window, although heavy steps could not have been heard at such a clamorous time. Then he did get a thrill, as in the gray darkness he made out several horsemen, their heads bowed low, passing the window and making for the rear of the house.

Springing to the fireplace, he pawed ashes over the charred débris he had used in lighting his candle, and then passed into the adjoining room in search of a hiding place, did the newcomers impress him as being hostile. He made for the fireplace which he knew should be opposite to that in the cook room, and found the chimney was built out so as to form a nook on the side toward the windows. There he took his position and waited.

The entrance of the storm refugees was abrupt, the clamor of their voices preceding them. They moved with a directness and confidence that betokened familiarity with the house. Without any hesitancy they turned into the cook room. They cursed the elements and called for rum. Then a sinister chord was struck as one ordered—

"Cut his damn guts out if he makes a move."

"Governors," whined a shrill voice. "Think I'd quit company like this to go out into weather like that?"

There was a sound of a body being hurled violently to one side; then a faint light began to burgeon close by Halwood's position. He stared at the spot on the wall for a moment, then stepped to it and found it was a hole. It was sufficiently large for him to peer through. He beheld a lighted candle, and beyond it were nondescript figures. After a second appraisal he was satisfied they were not soldiers of either army. The contrasts in their personal appearance were grotesque. One in a filthy coat wore an exquisite shawl for a sash. Another, lacking a shirt, had two heavy watch chains crossing the front of an expensive waistcoat. There were five of them besides a dark figure sprawled on the floor. Halwood set them down for irregulars, such as were loyal to neither side, but who robbed helpless noncombatants wherever found.

A brawny hand came into view, plucking a small jug from beside the candle. There followed the gurgling of liquor, a convulsive swallowing and the smacking of thick lips. Then a deep voice was demanding—

"Now, Syk, what you mean by saying you see a light in one of the upper winders?"

"Cap'n, I did see a light, sort of bobbery, moving up and down. It went passed a winder."

"Maybe old Cumbly's ghost," suggested a voice.

"Shatil, don't be a fool!" angrily rebuked the leader.

"It's his blood, up there on the floor. It's calling," said Syk huskily.

"Damn your liver! More talk like that 'n' I'll bash you," roared the captain. "Here! You started this ghost talk, Syk. You take a candle and go up and look around."

The man had no relish for the job. He asked that some one go with him. None of his companions cared to leave the cook room. Shatil advised—

"Let the prisoner go with him and carry the light."

"Good! Syk, take the prisoner. Have your pistol at his back. Shoot if he blows out the light, or makes a false move."

"See here, folks!" shrilly protested the prisoner. "With all this wind the candle might be blown out. I'm no fool. I'm not hankering to quit shelter. But if I must go upstairs, then let Mr. Syk carry a candle as well as me. Then if mine's blown out he'll have a light and can see I'm not up to any tricks."

"Good notion. You take a candle, Syk. Remember, he's the cleverest thief in old Washington's army."

"But I've quit the army," wailed the prisoner. "Isn't that in my favor? I've quit."

"You mean you deserted. All along of knowing you was to have fifty of the cat well laid on," growled the leader. "Get along both of you. You three boys make a good cooking fire."

CROWDING closer in his niche, Halwood watched the hallway door. He saw a thin faced, clean shaven man pass with lighted candle. Three feet behind him walked a disheveled creature, whose belt seemed to bristle with pistols.

Halwood realized his danger would be the greater when the two men returned. He also feared the mare would be found. It was of the greatest importance that he resume his journey once the tempest began to abate, as he doubted his being admitted if arriving to town after midnight. And already the sullen roar of the storm was passing on to the westward. He turned to renew his spying through the peephole and, in doing so, his left hand came in contact with bellows, hanging from a staple in the side of the chimney.

Instantly an idea formed in his quick mind. He gently removed the bellows and groped with his hand until he found a billet of wood. Standing at the peephole, he observed that the candle within his coign of vantage was the only one alight. The man at the fireplace was having difficulty in igniting the waste because of the wind and some rain sucking down the chimney. Gently inserting the nozzle of the bellows, Halwood pressed the handles together smartly. There sounded a hollow groan, and the candle beyond the wall went out.

He was in the hall and had passed to the cook room door almost before the frightened intruders could find their voices. He crossed the threshold of the cook room as a man close by tremulously cried out:

"That moaning sound! Old Cumberly sounded like that—"

With the sentence uncompleted he fell to the floor unconscious from the blow on his head.

"What's happened? Jed, what's the matter?" yelled the leader as he groped with hands and feet until he came to the quiet form. His men barked queries from behind him. From his crouching position the leader could make out,

vaguely, a dark figure between him and the hall doorway. He gave an inarticulate cry and yelled:

"Four of us in this room now! Should be only three."

Halwood raised the club and struck. The man slumped forward as if killed. The two men at the fireplace by this time were erect, their hearts weak with a terrible fear because of their leader's warning. They began milling about, trying to make a light. Halwood struck twice, and the room became still.

By this time Syk and the prisoner were clattering down the front stairway. Leaping into the hall, Halwood regained the adjoining room, and took up his position at the left of the doorway.

Syk was screaming:

"Cap'n! Cap'n! Why'n Tophet don't you answer?"

The prisoner, his hand shaking spasmodically and causing the candle to throw grotesque shadows, passed the doorway. Then came Syk, his long pistol held at his side, his mouth agape with fear. Halwood leaned forward and tapped him smartly. The prisoner, baring his teeth in a snarl, wheeled about in time to see his guard strike the floor. Then Halwood came into view and commanded:

"Get their weapons. Lead out all their horses! We're riding at once!"

"Gorrimighty! Who are you?" whispered the prisoner.

"I'm the man who has saved your worthless hide. Strip off all their weapons. Fetch the horses! I've saved the cleverest thief in Washington's Army from having his throat cut. Work fast, my lad. We must be traveling."

The man dropped on his knees and deftly removed Syk's weapons, while Halwood held the candle. Then the latter was inside the next room and, pointing at the inanimate figures, commanded—

"Strip them of their pistols."

The prisoner obeyed with marvelous celerity, a simple motion of the hand being sufficient to procure pistol or knife. To Halwood it looked as if the weapons leaped to meet the extended fingers. By this time the deserter was realizing that freedom was his if he would but bestir himself. His rescuer impressed him as being something more than mortal, perhaps because of his dandified dress.

With all the weapons gathered up, Halwood led the way to the rear of the house and ordered his companion to bring out all the enemy's horses. While this was being accomplished Halwood entered the cellar and led forth the mare. As the two gained the road they heard a door slam and a man shouting blasphemies, behind which was a heart of craven fear.

The horsemen lifted their mounts into an easy gallop and, after covering two miles, Halwood reined in and said—

"You're a deserter from the American army?"

"I was scared at the cat. I was to have had fifty on the bare back," the deserter said.

"What were you to be whipped for?"

"Stealing some rations—I was hungry."

"And if you stole some honest man would have gone hungry. But you've stolen before. Syk said you were the smartest thief in the army."

With an attempt at modesty, but not quite able to prevent a display of pride, the deserter said:

"Taking it all around, I suppose Sam Lydyg is as smart a thief as can be found in any army. I'm him."

"All right. I will take your word for it. I should have left you with your mates."

"My mates? Them bloody, murdering devils! I'd die before I'd be their like!" The man's words and manner impressed Halwood as being sincere.

"All right. That leaves the British army as a refuge. I'm riding into Philadelphia with the horses. You may come along."

The man astounded him by swearing furiously, and next by announcing:

"You can shoot me dead. Or I'll hang in chains till I rot; or even go into the British Provost and have the beast Cunningham badger the life out of me,

before I will as much as waggle a thumb to help the redcoats."

Halwood was interested. He insisted—

"But you'll steal food from your mates."

"I took from the quartermaster. Food hadn't been issued," corrected the deserter.

"And you're too pure to serve the British?" asked Halwood.

"You talk like books read," complained the deserter. "I talk plain. I'll hang before I'll serve the Britishers."

The man's mixed sense of morality increased Halwood's interest. He asked—

"But just what will you do?"

"Go back to my army."

"And be hanged for a deserter."

In the partial light the man's face was bleak and gray.

"Most likely," he conceded.

Halwood had a strange repugnance to imitating the Doanes by supplying the British army with horses. He suddenly came to a decision and said bruskly:

"You're a thief. In a very quaint way, you're an honest thief. The first I ever met. You take the horses and all the weapons and go back to your army. Maybe you can lie and say you were picked up near your camp by those rascals in the house."

"No. But I'll be mighty pleased to take the horses in. We need 'em most mightily. I'll git a hearing with General Washington if I can. With one of his general officers if I can't reach him. I'll tell the truth, live or hang."

"And never steal again if they'll let you off," added Halwood.

"I don't know about that, mister. My head acts queer when it comes to property."

"I believe your head is very queer; but ride on, my crazy friend."

"If ever I can pay you back something on account of what I owe you—"

"I'm afraid you won't have a chance. Good luck with the horses."

"A minute! A second! What army do you belong to?" cried the deserter.

"To—neither."

"And Halwood lifted his impatient mount into a handsome gallop and sped to Philadelphia.

CHAPTER V

HALWOOD RIDES TO TOWN

HALWOOD secured lodgings outside the city and entered in the morning. No one gave him any heed, as the attention of the soldiers and civilians was being held by the spectacle of nearly a score of mansions in the outskirts going up in roaring flames. These buildings were fired by order of General Howe to prevent them from possibly being used as a cover by American riflemen. The Quakers, and all others of the Tory population, had hailed Howe as a deliverer, but the destruction of so much property caused many to wonder a little.

The young schoolmaster was surprised by the gaiety of the streets and the general holiday appearance of the stores. The coming of the British had been the signal for an exodus of Whigs. Many buildings were left vacant. The stores were quickly occupied by itinerant merchants, who had catered to expensive tastes in New York, and who had followed the army with stocks of luxuries. The necessities of life might be hard to come by at times, but never during the war was there an occasion when costly raiment, expensive jewelry and beautiful knick-knacks might not be had in any city occupied by the British army.

Not until he had reached the corner of South Second and Little Dock Streets was Halwood accosted. A red faced sergeant ran into the road and halted him.

"What now, my friend?" demanded Halwood.

"No damn Quaker nor Yankee tricks with me!" roared the sergeant. "Dismount! Your mare's pressed."

Halwood backed, produced Moses Doane's writing and suggested—

"Perhaps you'd better read this and go a bit slow."

The sergeant barked an order, and his squad quickly surrounded the horseman with a ring of glittering bayonets. Then he took time to examine the paper. He puzzled his brows over the signature. Shifting his suspicious gaze to Halwood, he said:

"Never heard of this man. What's his rank?"

"He's a partisan."

"Then he can be damned. Slide out that saddle!"

Halwood glanced around the ring of steel, and hatred for all that the sergeant stood for suddenly engulfed him. He was about to obey the command, albeit there were feral lights in his eyes, when an officer came from the corner house and demanded—

"What's all this about, Sergeant?"

"Another goodish bit of horseflesh for his Majesty's army, sir."

"Very excellent, no doubt; and we are in sad need. But that piece of writing. Let me see it."

The sergeant handed over the crumpled paper, and the officer smoothed it and read it carefully. Then he handed it back to Halwood and said quite civilly:

"The Doanes have supplied us with many good horses. Moses Doane's indorsement of you will be respected. But you better go to headquarters and have this writing countersigned. Our honest sergeants know only one duty; pick up likely horseflesh. Sergeant, go with Mr. Halwood to the City Tavern and wait until some officer has written him a pass."

"And if no officer will do that, sir?"

"Follow your orders. Only in that event he will lose more than his mount—his liberty. He is a newcomer and is not free to roam about unless covered by a pass." To Halwood he said, "This paper is genuine, and will protect you and your property; else it is another Yankee trick and it will jail you."

"Thank you for your frankness, sir. I already have met Major André while in the company of my cousin, Moses Doane. I think he will remember me."

Escorted by the sergeant and his squad, he rode to the tavern, where the gay spectacle of handsome uniforms had attracted and was holding the curious townfolks. The sergeant took the paper, gave gruff orders to his men and disappeared inside the tavern. After an absence of ten minutes he returned and said—

"Major André will either vouch for you, sir, or send you to the Provost as soon as he has finished a bit of business."

That the sergeant was impressed by the placid bearing of the prisoner, and had no desire to be discourteous to a possible favorite of those attached to Sir William, was evidenced by his sudden civility. The squad stood sharply at attention as the fine figure of a man, fully six feet in height, came from the tavern, followed by a group of young officers. Mary Pemberton's coach, requisitioned for the convenience of Sir William, drew up. It contained one occupant, a local belle. Sir William swept off his hat, bowed low and lifted one slim, white hand to his lips, and said:

"Terribly sorry, Kitty. But I can't ride this morning. Matters of state, you know."

"But you were to review the regiment," she insisted petulantly.

"Damme! So I was. But you shall review it and take the salutes."

"The empty coach, carrying your colors, would receive the salutes," she said with a sniff.

"Egad! But here is a clever one. 'Pon my soul, Kitty, I'll make you a colonel. Then they shall salute you, coach or no coach."

He stepped back, gestured to the coachman, and his latest love rolled away to review a regiment proud of its history. It was commonly said that General Howe, Sir William, much resembled General Washington in physical appearance.

As soon as the coach had turned a corner Sir William was entering another, his satellites taking to horse and following him at a round gallop, all on pleasure bent.

"That was Sir William, sir," whispered the sergeant.

"And who is that coming? The short, fat officer with the round face and big nose?" queried Halwood.

"God ha' mercy! Be careful, young sir! That is Sir Henry Clinton."

"And there comes General Knyphausen," murmured Halwood, recognizing the man who spread butter with his thumb.

"Aye. You seem to know something."

"I was here at the tavern with the Doanes a short time ago. An officer pointed him out to me."

"Your friend could do us a great service by catching the rascals who steal our horses from the very streets," mumbled the sergeant.

Then he and his men became as stiff as many ramrods as a short, stout man with exceedingly sharp, dark eyes entered the tavern.

"Colonel Tarleton," murmured the sergeant. "And here comes Major André."

André, young and smiling, ran nimbly down the steps and recognized Halwood at sight. He cordially gave him his hand and greeted him.

"Our young Virginian comes to see us once more. When does he come to take service? Or is he raising an independent company of horse?"

Halwood, now on the ground, reminded:

"I am living with the Doanes, sir. Distant kinsmen of mine. I have but returned from a long visit to England. I scarcely have had time to place myself. An officer, housed at the corner of Little Dock and South Second Streets, courteously advised me to present this paper to you to be countersigned. Else I will lose my mount. This sergeant nearly had the mare."

André glanced over Moses Doane's awkward writing and quickly assured Halwood:

"I'll fix you all right, Mr. Halwood. Just a minute."

He hastened back into the tavern and soon returned with the paper. It bore the indorsement, "Countersigned by Major André." As he gave it to Halwood he jocosely said:

"That will let you pass, or enter, any place, except it be a council of war. Join us, and who knows but what soon you may be sitting in council."

"I will think of it. I am indebted to you for your courtesy and amiability."

"You speak like a schoolmaster who knows his English," said André.

"I am a schoolmaster, sir. Perhaps it partly explains my hesitation in another direction."

"Just now it's more important to teach the use of a powder horn than the horn book."

With that the major returned to his duties and Halwood swung into the saddle, his escort now very servile in bearing. After the squad left him he was halted twice, but the pass was an open sesame.

DARRACH was not at home, but his wife, a little woman of seemingly frail health, readily supplied him with the information he sought. They gossiped a bit, and after Halwood had described his experience with the sergeant she told him that the officer quartered there was an adjutant-general. As he rose to go Mrs. Darrach whispered in a low voice:

"Now that you can go almost anywhere why don't you visit the Walnut Street Prison and see how the poor prisoners fare? From what I hear their sufferings would tear the heart of any one born in this country, even if he be serving the King. And you're Virginia born."

"It was my intention to go there," said Halwood.

As he quit the house he found a group of idlers and street gamins surrounding the mare. One man, his face inflamed by early potations, was profuse in advertising his loyalty to King George. He felt officious, and with a motley group for an audience he desired to prove his partiality for the royal cause. He blocked Halwood's path and shouted loudly:

"Be you a good King's subject, or a lousy Yankee?"

The fellow wore no uniform, and Halwood sighed with relief. He caught him on the jaw and knocked him senseless. The group fell back. From the Darrach doorway a cold voice demanded—

"Do you object, sirrah, to his characterization of the rebels?"

Hot with anger, but suppressing all outward signs, Halwood wheeled and faced toward the adjutant-general, and coldly explained—

"I object to a brawling drunkard disturbing my convenience, sir."

"You have been here once before this morning?"

"I was forced to secure Major André's signature before I could complete my errand," answered Halwood.

He swung into the saddle, rode close to the doorway and handed over his pass. A glance at André's signature satisfied the officer and, quickly becoming amiable, he said:

"These loud mouthed riffraff, who served no side, no person, need rough treatment. I could wish that arch-rebel, Washington, nothing worse than to have all this town's trash pile in upon him."

Halwood bowed and cantered away. He slowed his pace to watch a battle between some British drummer boys and an equal number of town urchins. Both sides fought with great gallantry and valor, and if not for the tragedy of the hour the Virginian would have been highly regaled. On arriving at the Provost he saw the windows filled with gaunt faces and took notice of the long lines and little receptacles lowered to within reach of passersby; a peculiar form of fishing. Many of the windows were broken, leaving the poor inmates exposed to the chill of the fall nights.

He dismounted before the entrance, and a soldier bustled forward to learn his business. Halwood's appearance impressed the man, who became entirely obsequious after reading Major André's signature. He summoned a corporal of the guard, and almost at once a stockily built man, with a red, vicious face, appeared in the doorway and ordered roughly:

"Stop that damn bawling!" Then, after a quick survey of the visitor and a critical appraisal of the mare, his voice lost a bit of its edge, as he demanded, "You have business here?"

"I thought to go through the prison; at least, part of it." Halwood extended his pass, adding, "My credentials. You are—?"

"Captain Cunningham," snapped the man.

General Howe had made him a captain so he would not be hanged in event of his being captured. Halwood recalled Nancy Doane's words. This was the man who hanged Nathan Hale, scarcely more than a boy and betrayed to the enemy by his own cousin. Cunningham examined the writing, and his bearing changed. He was all smiles, all but fawning, as he returned the paper.

"Come in. Come in. I have some of the finest brandy ever taken from the cellars of thee-and-thou puttyheads. Your mare will be perfectly safe."

As an insurance against theft he swept his glaring gaze around the half circle of derelicts and soldiers.

The group fell back under the impact of that menacing stare. Halwood advanced to the entrance and was surprised to meet Edward Marshall, the man the Indians were seeking. He was doubly surprised to detect no sign of recognition in Marshall's quick glance. Cunningham, in the lead, read nothing of Halwood's transient expression. The latter was puzzled by Marshall's attitude. The man's presence in town was easily understood. He preferred any company to being exposed to a Delaware bullet or tomahawk. But why should he ignore a traveling companion?

All such cogitations were washed from his mind as he entered upon an experience which would have furnished a Dante with yet another circle of horrors. Just inside the entrance the florid, stocky commandant of this particular hell stepped

aside to allow a file of men to pass out, carrying those who had died during the night. These were buried close by in the Potter's field. Even as were the sugar house and other prisons in New York, so was this a charnel house. Cunningham paused to secure from his office a heavy whip with a loaded handle. His face became inflamed, Halwood noted, and his small black eyes lighted with ferocious expectancy as he led the way among the unfortunates.

He halted before a specter of a man and fished a piece of coarse rye bread from a pocket, and told the unfortunate:

"It's five days, my lad, since you've eaten. Suppose we say God bless the King, and then have a nice piece of bread?"

As he spoke he extended the crust almost within the prisoner's reach. The man feebly attempted to seize it.

"Not so fast, my hungry rebel. We're waiting for the blessing. Then it's yours. Just four words buy it. I think there are fat raisins in it."

Again he tempted the victim by thrusting the bread under his nose. But this time the man clasped his hands at his back and slowly turned his head aside.

IN A PAROXYSM of rage Cunningham yelled terrible oaths, clubbed his whip and raised it to strike. The prisoner gently toppled over on his side, his hollow eyes seeing nothing on earth.

"He's dead!" muttered Halwood.

"Yes, damn him!" snarled Cunningham. "He cheated me."

He blew a whistle, pointed to the corpse and proceeded with his inspection.

The entire building, with the exception of Cunningham's quarters, was damp and dreary. Each day increased the horrors of the place, with the rain and the sleet and the snow destined to blow through the broken windows during the entire winter. To Halwood the experience was worse than anything he ever had known. Each floor furnished beastly cruelties. Cunningham would order steaming soup to be placed before a group of hollow eyed scarecrows and then would kick it over. He was systematically starving the inmates to death.

"You have no love for them," remarked Halwood.

"Love! I was whipped during the rioting at Golden Hill. I swore then to get even with the curs. Each day I pay something on that score."

Halwood was nauseated by the sights revealed on every side. He clasped his hands at his back to resist the temptation to strike down the beast, who believed he was edifying his guest. But one mark of humanity did the morning reveal, and that may have been a whim. A starving drummer boy, a mere wisp of a child, stepped before the brute and feebly requested that his youth and incapacity for injuring the British cause should be considered, and that he be let go.

"All right, six-pence, kneel and kiss the stones," said Cunningham.

The lad did so, and then demanded his release, that the jailer keep his word. To Halwood's amazement Cunningham gave orders for the child's release. As if fearing this might suggest a softening of the heart, he forthwith began lashing and clubbing all within reach as he led his heartsick guest from floor to floor. Halwood distributed considerable of the Doane counterfeits unobserved, surreptitiously pressing the notes in clawing hands, while Cunningham continued oblivious to all in seeking new victims for his cruelties.

At last the terrible pilgrimage was over, and Halwood's heart was heavy with the thought that his visit was responsible for the outrages. When he found himself on the ground floor he had great difficulty in concealing his loathing. He excused himself from taking brandy on the grounds of the earliness of the hour. He wanted to get away, although he knew he always should carry the terrible pictures in his mind. He returned Cunningham's gesture of goodby with a ghastly smile. He had done as Nancy Doane had re-

quested. His next errand was to secure a serviceable outfit.

He found a shop a street away. The proprietor, his eyes filled with cupidity, bore down on him, gently rubbing his hands. The war to these merchants meant nothing except the opportunity for turning fat profits. Adverse winds and American privateers might turn back the flour fleet from Cork and cause a shortage of bread; but at no time, for a gentleman possessing the price, was there a lack of clothing. The merchant had made a fortune in New York and would double it before Philadelphia was evacuated.

The customer's presentiment proclaimed him as being one who would demand the best. Halwood was shown a display of the latest modes, and the shop carried a stock which would do credit to any in London.

"I have enough of such gear," said the Virginian. "I want something subdued and serviceable. Please don't talk so much. You make my head ache. I'll wait on myself. If I find what I want I'll tell you. Anything you suggest will be just what I won't buy. Go away!"

The proprietor left him, convinced he was dealing with a man of quality. Halwood examined the stock and finally found a plain suit of "second best" cloth, worth seven pounds prior to the war. Now it was priced at twenty-five. He beckoned to the proprietor and said—

"I'll take this if you will accept Continental currency."

"It's twenty-five pounds, sterling," mused the storekeeper. "I would have to have seventy-five pounds, Continental, and trust to getting rid of it quick."

"It's immaterial to me whether you get rid of it, or keep it," coldly informed Halwood. "The price is exorbitant, but I am taking it."

This curtness of speech further elevated the customer in the merchant's opinion. He fairly babbled about the depreciated American paper money. In another six months he would be demanding more than three hundred pounds, paper money, for the same suit.

Halwood had planned to remain that night in town, but he was quite overwhelmed by the misery he had witnessed. He had believed it to be impossible for the King's officers to permit the abuses he had heard about. He knew he must repeat much of his sightseeing to Nancy Doane. With his purchase strapped at the back of his saddle he rode toward the City Tavern, which he would pass in leaving the town. So absorbed was he with his meditations he would have ridden by the inn without giving it notice if not for a violent interruption of his somber revery. His mare reared, and he lifted his head and discovered a man clinging to her bridle.

"Leave go, fool!" roared Halwood.

The mare's forefeet came to the ground, and the man was at the stirrup, crying:

"Damn you! No Doane paper protects you here!"

Halwood stared down into the rage convulsed face and recognized Captain Long. Already subalterns were gathering to enjoy the spectacle of an officer bedeviling a civilian.

"The man I tossed through a window!" exclaimed Halwood. "Captain Long, I believe."

"Get down!" roared the infuriated officer.

Halwood swung the mare about, and her flashing heels secured for him more room from the rapidly increasing crowd of spectators.

"What's the meaning of this confusion?" demanded a harsh voice.

Captain Long spun about and saluted a dark faced man, whose mustaches reached below his jaw.

"Colonel Stedfan," he exclaimed, "this man insulted me grossly."

"And you didn't shoot him," growled the colonel.

"He claims to be a Virginian gentleman. I have demanded satisfaction of him."

The colonel twisted his head, glared at Halwood and asked the captain:

"Does he refuse to meet you? If so have the drummers and fifers hustle him from town."

Halwood was white-hot with rage. His natural irascibility was doubled by the crimes he had witnessed in the Provost. The colonel fairly bellowed:

"Can't you speak? Lost your tongue?"

"I'm not one who is drummed and fifed out of town. As to losing my tongue, that's none of your damned business. I threw your friend through a window for insulting me. If he wants to be more seriously injured, and providing I can find some one not connected to him, or you, by friendly ties, I will meet him. I warn him he will get scanty satisfaction from that meeting."

"Hear a dog of a boaster crow!" roared the colonel, his face suffused with anger. "A damned scurvy citizen. A town clod—"

A hand touched his arm. He twisted wrathfully about, but withheld a vituperative outburst on finding himself facing one of General Howe's aides. The latter gave him a torn piece of paper on which was written in a hasty scrawl:

> The gentleman carries a pass, indorsed by headquarters. He is connected with the Doanes, a powerful suburban family, now furnishing us with many replacements for the cavalry.

Halwood glanced around for the writer of the note, and beheld Major André in the doorway of the inn.

THE COLONEL realized this was a warning, although in the guise of information. His face was choleric as he endeavored to decide how he could proceed, or retreat, without incurring his superior's displeasure, or the spectator's amusement. Self-interest warned him to withdraw from his truculent position. He was about to do so, when a horseman boldly forced a passage through the gathering crowd and called out to Halwood—

"If you need a second, I'll stand by you, Mr. Halwood."

Halwood smiled on beholding the dashing Captain FitzPatrick, lavishly attired and as debonair as ever.

"I thank you, Captain. I am in a hurry to be riding. As the challenged party I choose pistols. This fiery individual seems to be spokesman for Captain Long. Suppose you arrange the details with him."

"Gladly! Gladly! I have the honor to pay my respects to whom?"

The last to the colonel. Stedfan gave his name and rank, his gaze now raking the front of the tavern in the hope of beholding André emerging to stop the affair. But the latter had given warning and had now withdrawn.

Captain Long flashed his teeth in a soundless laugh. He had feared he might again be made ridiculous by the countryman selecting some uncouth weapon, or mode of combat. Pistols would have been his own choice.

FitzPatrick smiled benignly on principal and second, and cried:

"Stab me dumb! That's the talk we like to hear. To horse! Ten minutes' ride will place us where none can intrude, where this bit of trouble can be smartly settled."

"If there is no question of social standing," mumbled Colonel Stedfan.

"We will concede that point, and accept your man as an equal for the time being," promptly replied FitzPatrick. "When I tell you my friend is a Halwood of Virginia you will realize there is none in your army to question his position."

Captain Long hastened to secure a mount. Colonel Stedfan, mumbling rare oaths behind his long mustaches, clambered on a big horse, his misgivings heavy upon him. Riding alongside FitzPatrick, he said in an undertone—

"We can be spared this bother, if your man will simply state no offense was intended."

"But he threw your man through a window, my dear Colonel. It was so obviously disrespectful I fear we must go on with it. However, if your man will apologize—"

"Have done!" roared the infuriated officer.

Long came up, pressing recklessly

through the crowd, his face seething with deadly hate. Colonel Stedfan could not withdraw. In silence he urged his horse into a gallop, with FitzPatrick and Halwood in the lead. Their course led to the street of burned houses. Beyond the smoking ruins they met a small party of staff officers, and FitzPartick reined in and called:

"I see Major Binney. My dear Major, we sadly need, if only for appearance's sake, a surgeon. Could you spare us one for a few minutes?"

The horsemen wheeled as one to witness what they knew was to be a duel; and Stedfan cursed inaudibly that he had not thought to abandon the affair for the lack of a physician.

Halwood observed that FitzPatrick was a favorite with several of the officers, but that for himself there was nothing but cold stares. FitzPatrick led the way to a broad lawn behind a deserted mansion, where ancient trees permitted each man to stand in the shade. FitzPartick next offered Halwood his choice of two beautiful silver mounted pistols, but the Virginian thanked him and drew his own weapon from the saddle holster.

The preliminaries were then quickly arranged, a distance of fifty feet being decided upon. Halwood threw off his gay coat and requested the loan of writing material, if there be any in the party. An officer of the commissariat quickly accommodated him with a quill, a lead bottle of ink and a sheet of paper. Halwood wrote a few words and folded the paper. In a half whisper he told FitzPatrick—

"I trust to your honor that no eyes except those of the recipient shall read what I've written."

"You have my word, Halwood; I am honest to that extent." And Halwood knew the scamp in that particular, at least, could be trusted as fully as the highest in the land.

The seconds paced off the ground, and Major Binney was selected to count three, the duelists being at liberty to fire after the numeral was called. It also was agreed that the firing should be repeated until a man was seriously wounded, or an apology should be made. A staff officer carefully loaded both weapons and the principals took their position, Halwood holding his pistol pointing to the sky. The combatants stood side to each other, their chins hunched below the exposed shoulder. Major Binney announced:

"You may aim, but if one fires before the word, the second party offended against will be at liberty to shoot him down."

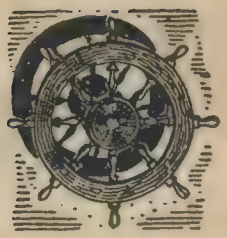
Halwood sighted, and saw the malevolent eye of his adversary blazing along the long barrel.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" called Major Binney.

Receiving a curt answer, given in unison, he raised a hand and slowly began counting—

"One—two—"

TO BE CONTINUED



ALL HANDS ON DECK

By BILL ADAMS

"ROUSE out you sleepers! Come, now! Rise and shine!"
How would you like to hear that cry again?
You rolled into your bunk at eight, and now it's nine!
You hear the wind, the lashing of the rain.
You thought they'd let you sleep until eight bells, till
midnight came!
Your every limb is sore. You're aching weary. You feel
vast swells
Surge under her deep keel. "Rouse out there, dearie!
We're going to take
The upper topsails in. It's blowing up like hell. It's
black as sin.
All hands on deck, my son!" And out you tumble
To grope for sodden sea boots and your oilskin coat,
And wrap a towel tight about your throat to keep the water out.
You groan, you grumble. The one who calls you laughs, with
mocking lips.
He's better used than you are to the ways of ships.
He's been at sea three years, and you but one. "We're going
to furl the topsails!
Ain't *that* fun?" Your sopping bunk was luxury. It still is
steaming
From your young body's warmth while you lay dreaming
that you were back ashore.
Ah, happy days! You step out to the night, out to the sprays.
You hear a sail
Crashing above you, lowered for the gale. A grayback roars
aboard and knocks you down.
Before you gain your feet you almost drown!
"Where's that young useless pup?" You hear the mate—
"All hands on deck, and that young lubber's late!"
Somehow you struggle up the deck's mad slope.
Somehow you find your place upon the rope.
The boatswain's bawling, "Yo-ho—haul-away! Hi-leee!"
Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea?

The Saga of an

A NOVELETTE

BY J. D NEWSOM

HASSAN EL HADOUB was fast asleep on the floor of the compartment when the train reached Oran in Algeria.

His awakening was brutal, for as soon as the train came to a standstill his traveling companions stampeded. There were fourteen of them in the compartment. All fourteen tried to reach the door at the same time.

At first, before he could collect his wits, Hassan thought he was back in his native village and that the village was being attacked. People trod on him. There was a great deal of shouting and yelling. He tried to sit up and a bulky parcel smelling of overripe melons was dragged over his head.

Instinctively he lashed out with fists and feet and made a nuisance of himself until some one stepped heavily on his floating ribs. The pressure drove all the breath out of his lungs and kindled a spark of common sense in his brain. It dawned upon him that he was on a train, but the noise made him think the train had been wrecked.

He knew very little about steam traction. In fact, it was the first time he had ever traveled otherwise than on foot or on horseback. His only experience with trains was that they offered easy targets for a sniper even at fairly long ranges. Once he had helped to loot a string of cars on the Guercif spur line after his clan had sweated all night tearing up the rails.

MIRAGE

Memories of that raid flashed through his mind. He saw the splintered cars and the mangled bodies of the passengers. He remembered how his hands had grown wet and sticky delving in dead men's pockets; and he remembered how the coaches had burned black and red against the pale dawn sky.

And for once those epic memories made him a trifle sick. Fear clutched at his heart. He was overcome by an irresistible desire to get out of that narrow compartment—to get out at any price before the flames began to spread. With a mighty effort he threw off the bundles, parcels and feet which pinned him to the floor boards. He struggled to his knees. His right hand groped beneath the folds of his *jellaba*, hunting for the smooth hilt of his knife.

Then the door flew open and fourteen wrathful travelers heaved him out on to the sunlit platform. He landed on his ear. Dazed by the impact, he commended his soul to Allah and waited for the end. But his assailants had forgotten him. They tumbled out of the coach, as though Shaitan himself were goading them on, and joined the crowd, which was hurrying toward a narrow gateway where two sweating railroad employees were doing their best to keep from being swept off their feet.

Hassan lay motionless until a soldier in a khaki uniform walked all over his outstretched legs.

"Name of God!" cried the soldier. "Look at him: he's drunk, the lucky swine. Drunk—and I have to wait until pay day to wet my whistle. It's a crime!"

He vented his resentment at this unjust dispensation of fate by kicking Hassan in the small of the back.

Once again Hassan commended his soul to Allah and waited for the downward thrust of the bayonet. But there was no downward thrust, no bayonet. The soldier dodged through the crowd and was gone.

It was a mad, incomprehensible world. Hassan was too bewildered to make head or tail of it. He picked himself up. Instantly he was elbowed aside and thrust back against the hot, paint blistered side of the coach. And the strange part of it all was that people had no personal grudge against him. Arabs and white men, negroes and soldiers and veiled women, they were alike in this respect: they simply ignored his existence. When he stumbled across their path they thrust him aside and forgot him.

Moreover, they were just as rough in their dealings with one another. The air was full of shouts and cries and imprecations.

A small French child in a skimpy sailor suit went by, howling its head off. In one hand it held an orange, in the other an empty paper bag. Its mouth was festooned with crumbs.

"*Maman!*" it yelled. "*Maman!*"

A woman, red faced and angry, fought her way through the throng. She caught

the child by the scruff of the neck and smacked it twice.

"Bad one!" she exclaimed. "Thou little devil!"

She pointed a long forefinger at Hassan.

"Ooo, see the nasty man," she went on. "He eats little boys. Come away quickly, my precious cabbage!"

Wide eyed with horror, the child gaped at Hassan. He yelled louder than ever. His mother caught him up in her arms and kissed him passionately. They went on. The boy peered over his mother's shoulder at the child eating fiend.

"My orange!" he wailed. "I have lost my beautiful orange. The nasty man made me lose my orange!"

But they did not turn back. The orange rolled past Hassan's dusty feet and fell off the platform.

Wedged in between two coaches he watched the antics of his fellow travelers. He could not imagine why they were in such a hurry. The whole thing was beyond him. Up in the Tafilalet range, where he came from, such a panic could only be caused by the imminent danger of death. He listened for the sound of rifle shots—and nothing happened. No shots, no bullets, no hint of danger.

HE GAVE it up. The only possible conclusion to be drawn from the people's conduct was that they were crazy. For ten hours or more they had been content to sit cooped up in stuffy compartments, eating and drinking and talking together like long lost friends. Now, simply because they had reached their goal, they were possessed by a mania for haste and more haste, as though the momentum of the train still drove them blindly on.

It was Hassan's first contact with modern, high pressure civilization and it filled him with intense amazement.

His mood changed, however, as soon as he became accustomed to the meaningless confusion. He felt nothing but contempt for the mob's frantic struggles to get out of the station.

Down here they were the masters, these corrupt, hysterical city bred folk. They could afford to shove him out of their way without a thought or a glance. But he knew of a gorge, not so very far away, where just such cattle when they caught sight of the men of his clan turned tail and fled—and died as the bullets ripped the life out of their bodies.

A lean, cruel smile hovered about the corners of his mouth. He was strong with the strength of ten men—lean and bony and hard—a hawk among sparrows. Nothing could prevent him from carrying out his mission.

He had left his hills and journeyed to the very heart of his enemies' stronghold to find a French soldier, a colonel by the name of Louchet. And when he found Louchet he was going to kill him. There was nothing complicated about the business.

Louchet was the most dangerous Frenchman who had ever attempted to subdue Hassan's clan, the Sidi-Yuffizi. His weapons were lies and bribes, honors and flattery. He was sapping the faith of the outlying clans who had to bear the brunt of the fighting. Instead of sending his soldiers into the narrow passes where they could be hamstrung at leisure, he had adopted tactics which were bleeding the Sidi-Yuffizi white. He had put an embargo on foodstuffs, his spies poisoned the wells where the flocks were watered, and he had an uncanny knack of running down the gun smugglers who supplied the rebels with the sinews of war.

The *Zuwia*—the secret religious brotherhood which controlled the destinies of the tribe—had selected Hassan to deal with the colonel. They could not have chosen a better man. He had nerves of steel, infinite patience and implicit faith in his Maker. No matter what the odds might be he would perform his duty. Afterward, if necessary, he would die fighting, with the name of the one true God on his lips.

"The end is in sight," he told himself. "Praise be to Allah, most merciful and compassionate! I am the sword in his hand. His arm will guide me."

He was still deep in thought when the second assistant station master marched up to him.

The second assistant station master was a short, stout man with straggling whiskers, pop eyes, and an evil temper. He wore a celluloid collar, a black alpaca coat and a gold braided cap. In his hand he carried a small red flag.

He was not at all impressed by Hassan's appearance. For that matter there was not a single native in North Africa who could impress him. Black or brown or *café-au-lait*, hillsmen or town dwellers, they were all one to him. He handled thousands of them every day. They walked a chalk line when he was about. Oh, but yes they did!

He was more cantankerous than ever that day, for he was suffering from prickly heat. He was literally itching for a fight when he strode up to Hassan and shook the little red flag in his face.

"Is it that I must exhaust myself in the heat of the day driving good for nothing cretins of your species out of the station?" he demanded. "This is the end of the line, imbecile. This is Oran. The train goes no further. If it did it would demolish the entire station. But you will certainly go to prison if your ticket is not valid for the journey."

Hassan had learned a smattering of French, mostly obscene, from deserters who had joined the ranks of the Beni-Yuffizi. The station master's flow of language baffled him completely. He caught the one word, "ticket."

"Yes, I have the ticket," he explained, repeating the lesson he had learned by heart. "From Udjda to Oran. I am a keeper of goats. I come to work for my father's brother who has a shop here."

He produced the strip of pasteboard from the leather pouch strapped to his girdle. The railroad man promptly knocked it out of his hand, cracking him over the knuckles with the flag.

"Mangy camel of the most foul," he roared indignantly, "do you mistake me for a vulgar ticket collector? Dolt! Rat faced dolt! Listen to me. I am the station master. I am telling you to get out of the way. Remove your carcass from the proximity of the train. It desires to shunt—to back out—to retire. The engine whistles. Are you deaf? Make haste! I desire to give the necessary 'all clear' signal!"

Hassan shook his head. He looked at the ticket lying on the ground, then he stared at the apoplectic white man. He closed his eyes to shut out the sight of that sweating, twitching face. His heart was hammering against his ribs. An overwhelming desire to dig his fingers into that flabby neck swept through him. He could not trust himself to speak or move.

"Pick up that ticket!" stormed the official. "At once! And get out of here. You don't own the entire State Railway system. Not yet. And let me tell you it will be a bad day for Algeria if ever you do. Now then—quick! *Fiche moi le camp!*"

To give more weight to his order he added a few choice curses in Arabic. There was no mistaking his meaning when he called Hassan the misbegotten son of a hundred fathers.

A YELLOW gleam shot through Hassan's eyes and his thin lips curled back off his teeth. Time and space lost all meaning. He was up in his hills again, face to face with the enemy of his race. The blood roared in his ears. He crouched, every muscle taut, ready to spring at the infidel's throat.

But the infidel, who was nobody's fool, met him more than halfway. He clouted Hassan over the side of the head with the flag and followed this up by butting him in the pit of the stomach.

The force of the blow flung Hassan against the side of a coach. Before he could steady himself a mighty wallop landed on the point of his jaw. His knees sagged. A kick in the groin put him out of action. The pain doubled him up. He rolled off the platform on to the track, close to the shining wheels.

His face came in contact with something soft and pungent which squashed out flat beneath him. A strong taste of orange juice filled his mouth. It squirted up into his nostrils and ran down his beard. Even in his agony he recalled the crumby mouthed brat who had dropped the orange. He was sorry he had not disemboweled the filthy little beast with its saucer-like eyes, ogling him over its mother's shoulder.

He was given no leisure to dwell upon such murderous ideas. Calloused hands caught hold of his ankles and dragged him up on to the platform. Several men in uniform bent over him. They were grinning from ear to ear. He heard the station master bellow with laughter.

For one second he was tempted to snatch out his knife and show these dogs how a Beni-Yuffizi could die. In the nick of time he remembered the mission which had brought him to Oran. He had sworn by the Koran, he had taken the seven-fold oath to find Colonel Louchet and kill him. Nothing else mattered. Later, when his task was done, he could wipe out the insults heaped upon him by his foes.

He lay still, pressing both hands against his injured stomach.

"*Eh, le pauvre!*" chuckled the station master. "He thought he could scare me. Can you imagine it? But I've taught him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry. Hey, you—" he tickled Hassan's ribs with the toe of his boot— "come along. You're not hurt. *Roh!* Get up!"

Hassan stood up. He was very sore.

"That's the boy," the official approved good naturedly. "You do as you're told and you'll get along fine in this big city. We don't stand for any nonsense here. You'll have to look alive, I'm telling you."

His anger had dropped as quickly as it had flared up. He had asserted his authority in the only way a pig headed native could understand and he was very pleased with himself.

Hassan kept his mouth tight shut. He had just caught sight of a tall, weather-beaten man in a khaki uniform which he knew all to well. The man was a *gendarme:* one of the hounds Louchet sent out to track down deserters and ransack caravans in search of hidden rifles. Hassan hated all *gendarmes*. They were stubborn, fearless men and they shot remarkably straight.

There was an ominous scowl on this one's face.

"I've a good mind to run him in," he declared. "Creating a disturbance in a public place . . . . Can't allow such things to occur. Hillman, judging by his looks. Wild man—did he threaten you?"

"He's not worth the bother," shrugged the station master. "Let him go, the poor dumb fool. He was ugly for a minute, but I soon tamed him. He'll be all right. He doesn't know what it's all about yet."

"It's your station," grunted the *gendarme*. "If you won't press the charge I won't insist." He turned toward Hassan. "You, Sidi-whatever-your-name-is, first time you've ever been to Oran, hm? Where are you going? Speak up!"

Hassan repeated his carefully prepared alibi. The *gendarme* tugged at his mustache.

"Going to work for an uncle, hm? Got any papers? No, of course you haven't. You'd lose your head if it weren't screwed on tight. Where does he live, this cock-eyed uncle of yours? What's his trade?"

"He lives in the Street of the Butchers," Hassan answered meekly. "He is called Muhammad ibn Muhammad abd el—"

"That doesn't seem enough," commented the *gendarme*. "In the Street of the Butchers, hm? That's up in the nigger village. You'll never get there."

"Sidi, I am as one lost and blind."

"You look it. Here, grab hold of that ticket of yours and come along with me. I'll put you on the right track."

A shudder ran through Hassan's body as the *gendarme* gripped him by the arm, but he was too numb to offer any resistance. The station master clapped him on the back and wished him luck. A minute later he was standing at the head of the broad flight of steps leading down into the street, listening as best he could to the directions the *gendarme* was giving him.

"First to the right—up the hill past the church—third street to the left . . ."

The street was alive with amazing sights and sounds. Trolley cars clanged, horns squawked, engines spluttered. The sidewalks were packed and jammed. Tall white buildings, six stories high, lined the way. The air stank of hot asphalt, gasoline fumes and scorched rubber.

The one familiar thing that greeted Hassan's startled gaze was the sight of an aged Arab dressed in rags, riding on the rump of a moth eaten donkey. Like the ghost of a long dead past, it threaded its placid way through a maze of hurtling, roaring traffic.

The next instant Hassan forgot the old man. He was startled to see scores of half naked women parading the streets. He had been told that they never veiled their faces, but knee length skirts were something he had not anticipated. And high heeled shoes! And bare arms!

His head swam.

"Got that all straight?" the *gendarme* was saying. "Don't go wrong or you'll never find it."

Hassan felt himself being shoved forward. In a dream he walked down the steps and kept on going. Everything was unreal and chaotic. Why had the station master first knocked him down, then patted him on the back? He didn't know. Why had the *gendarme* been so pleasant instead of shooting him full of lead? He couldn't begin to unravel the puzzle. And Oran was full of such puzzles.

"First to the right," he repeated. "Up the hill past the mosque . . . *Inch'Allah!* This is a terrible city! A very terrible city!"

And as he walked up the street, keeping close to the buildings, out of the way of the traffic, he plucked bits of orange rind out of his beard.

A woman, wondering why his cheeks were coated with orange pulp, glanced at him. She had small twinkling eyes and a bright red mouth. He lengthened his stride to get away from the she-devil.

"First to the right," he muttered. "First to the right!"

II

THE SENTRY on duty outside the main entrance to the administrative offices of the Oran Command was as sloppy and nonchalant as only a French sentry can be. He stood with his back to the wall, lounging in a patch of shadow thrown by the red, white and blue sentry box. His eyes were half shut. From time to time he mustered enough energy to transfer his weight from his right to his left foot or *vice versa*. Occasionally he yawned, wriggling his shoulder blades against the rough stones.

A miraculous change came over him, however, a few minutes before five o'clock, when a tall, spare man came walking briskly across the courtyard. From one second to the next his whole bearing changed. Wide awake and alert he leaped to attention.

"Guard!" he shouted. "Turn out!"

A picket of eleven men headed by a sergeant dashed out of the guard room, buttoning buttons, adjusting caps, buckling belts as they ran. They formed up on two ranks. Raucous sounds issued from the sergeant's throat. Twelve rifles swung up to the "present". Turned to stone, twelve troopers stared straight to their front.

The tall spare man touched the vizor of his *képi* with the tip end of a riding crop. He nodded amiably to the sergeant as he went by. The ceremony was over; a lieutenant-colonel had finished his day's work.

Another outburst of sound came from the sergeant's throat. The picket turned about and tramped back into the guard house. The lone sentry paced his beat, hammering the hot flagstones with his heels as though his life depended upon it.

On the sidewalk the colonel paused long enough to light a cigaret. He exhaled a lungful of smoke and switched his black boots with his riding crop.

Hassan, squatting on the opposite side of the street with his feet in the dusty gutter, stirred a little, and a vein on his temple began to throb. He gave no other sign of

life. To the busy people on the sidewalk he was just another shiftless Arab basking in the sunshine.

But his eyes smoldering behind the drooping lashes were wide awake. He missed no detail however small. Surely that was his man. There was no mistaking that long, flat cheeked face with its monocle and its scrubby mustache. He had heard it described a hundred times.

Hassan glanced up the street. Fifty yards away a hog-fat Arab in a saffron colored *burnous* stood by the curb, waiting, so it seemed, for a trolley car.

There was no car in sight. The fat Arab cleared his throat, spat lusciously in the gutter and waddled away.

Hassan yawned, stretching his arms above his head, making his joints crack. The long wait was at an end. His hour had come. The officer over there was Colonel Louchet. Yacub abd el Suleiman had given the signal.

Yacub was his "uncle". Ostensibly he was a law abiding butcher, dabbling in his spare time in real estate. But the business was a blind. He made far more money supplying the Tafilet tribes with guns and bullets and information than he had ever amassed from the sale of cold storage mutton.

It was not a question of sentiment. Smuggling with him was a business and nothing but a business. At first he had refused point blank to have anything to do with Hassan's scheme. He didn't want to be implicated in any such crazy plot, and he cursed Hassan for having sought him out. Nevertheless, after Hassan had poured five hundred dourous on to the candle lighted table, he changed his mind and agreed to lead the hillman within striking distance of his quarry.

Even so he was not very enthusiastic. Some of the things he said had a disturbing effect upon Hassan.

"They will catch you and shoot you," he pointed out with the bland condescension of a sophisticated townsman dealing with a yokel. "It will be slow. Justice—" he shrugged his heavy shoulders—"but you do not understand the first thing about the justice of the French. They will not shoot you down while their hearts are full of anger. That is not their way. They will put you in prison, and question you. Day after day they will question you. They will try to wrench my name from your lips. If you mention it, Hassan, remember this: not another rifle will ever reach your people, not another bullet. For I can purchase my freedom by telling all I know, and when that happens the Beni-Yuffizi will be brought to their knees, begging for mercy."

"I am unafraid," said Hassan, "and my lips are sealed."

"Perhaps. But later on, in two months, or three, or six—when you have forgotten the sight of the sun and the prison cold has turned your lungs to water, what then? Will your strength endure?"

"To the very end. My life was forfeit from the day I left my hills. I am ready to die at my appointed hour."

"Yes," admitted Yacub after a pause, "you are a fanatic. I can see that. I do not think you will weaken, but have you ever wondered what good you will accomplish by throwing away your life?"

"If I can kill this dog—"

"The French have a hundred other colonels ready to take his place. They come swarming off their ships like lice. One more, one less—it is a small thing to them; but you are more useful alive than dead. It is not too late to turn back."

"I shall not turn back," said Hassan. "Take me where I can find my man."

THE COLONEL stood less than a stone's throw away, smacking his legs with his riding crop.

Abruptly he turned on his heel and went marching down the street. His legs were long. In a disconcertingly short space of time he reached the corner of the Boulevard Seguin and passed out of sight.

Hassan, his breath whistling through clenched teeth, followed as fast as he dared, and as fast as he could. Stragglers cluttered the sidewalk. In his haste he

jostled a large, many chinned Frenchwoman who, conscious of her superior social status as a representative of the conquering race, trod on his heels and called him such pet names as cow and camel and pig.

She was still shouting zoological definitions after him when he reached the boulevard. He caught a glimpse of the colonel's *képi* bobbing above a sea of heads. He darted across the roadway. At least he tried to dart. But he hadn't taken two steps before he became entangled in a maze of vehicles. A great van lumbered at him. He leaped aside and narrowly missed being run over by a trolley car. Behind the trolley car came a tumbril drawn by six mules with jangling bells on their collars. Everybody in creation seemed to be cursing him. Passing drivers shook clenched fists in his face.

Somehow he reached the opposite shore.

"*Fullah!*" the bystanders hooted. "Peasant! You'll get used to it some day."

He didn't hear their jeers, nor did he notice their leering faces. His eyes were glued on the receding *képi*. The crowd on the boulevard was thicker than ever. Shops were closing down for the day. The sun had slipped down behind the shoulder of the hill which overhangs the city, and a cool breeze off the sea was driving the stagnant air out of the streets. Whole families sauntered along, six abreast. Most of them were Europeans—French or Spanish or Italian. The handful of natives scattered through the slow moving throng looked strangely out of place, aliens in an alien city.

Hassan broke into a run. The *képi* was almost out of sight. At every step he barged into some one. The slightest touch aroused the vociferous indignation of the promenaders. They objected to being shouldered aside by a native, dressed in verminous rags, who stank like a goat. Their curses followed him as he dashed headlong through their midst.

He was too overwrought to bother about anything or anybody interfering with his man hunt. He looked dangerous and, beyond a doubt, he was dangerous—a lean, wiry panther with muscles of steel turned loose in a flock of bleating sheep.

He could not afford to fail. For the sake of his people, for the honor of his clan, he must catch that dog and rip out his heart.

And the *képi* suddenly vanished.

The colonel had disappeared beneath the awning of the Café Continentale, where he stopped every evening to listen to the music and enjoy a well earned *apéritif*.

But Hassan knew nothing of the colonel's habits, and even less about sidewalk cafés. His prey had escaped! A hoarse, inarticulate cry burst from his lips. He bounded forward, driving frantically toward the spot where he had last seen the red *képi*.

A family group, walking hand in hand, barred his way. On the right there was a sedate, black bearded gentleman with a white piqué waistcoat, a cigar and a panama hat. A sallow skinned lady with a green hat and a feather boa was on the left. Sandwiched in between them there was a child in a sailor suit.

The child, as soon as it laid eyes on Hassan, went into convulsions. It shrieked with terror: a shriek so piercing that it startled every person within earshot. The policeman on point duty at the intersection of the boulevard and the Place d'Armes left the traffic to take care of itself and hurried toward the scene of the disturbance.

In a fifth of a second a mob ten-deep surrounded Hassan and the family group.

"That man!" howled the child, clutching at its mother's skirts. "Oh, *maman*, don't let him eat me! Oh, *maman*, don't let him touch me!"

Whichever way Hassan turned white people confronted him. Hard eyed and suspicious, they stared at him. They were ready to believe the worst. He looked vicious, a bad actor. What was the poor little infant saying?

"Yesterday at the station," he sobbed. "My orange. Oh, boo-hoo! I want my orange. My nice big orange *maman* bought for me at Tlemcen!"

"Do you mean to tell me this ruffian

stole Poulot's orange?" exclaimed the father, squaring his shoulders and sticking out his white piqué waistcoat. "This is an outrage!"

"Poulot lost the orange," the woman assured him. "He lost it. It fell—"

The father swept these weak explanations aside.

"And this wretch pounced upon it! He snatched up my Poulot's orange!"

"Wah! Wah!" wailed Poulot, hiding behind his father's legs and pointing a finger of scorn at Hassan. "The nasty man—he eats little boys!"

Hassan threatened the irate parent with his clenched fist. There was a crazy, maniacal light in his eyes.

"Make way!" he thundered. "Stand back!"

"*Voleur!*" several of the bystanders cried. "Thief! Robber! Bandit! String him up!"

A cane rattled smartly against the backs of Hassan's bare calves. Goaded to desperation, he hurled himself upon Poulot's father. Down went father and child. A full throated roar greeted this brutal act. Hassan fought like an unleashed fiend, kicking and clawing and gouging as he tried to burst through the swaying mass of humanity which threatened to smother him.

He reached for his knife tucked away inside his waistband, but the mob, now thoroughly aroused, gave him no chance to commit murder. The sheep became wolves. They closed in, shoving one another aside in their struggle to get within range. For every blow Hassan struck ten rained down upon him. His turban was knocked off. Fists and sticks beat a tattoo on his shaved skull.

A dozen willing hands caught hold of his arms and twisted them up behind his back. And then the real fun began. Doughty citizens, who had not the faintest idea what the brawl was about, stepped up boldly and slammed the sacred name of a specimen of a cow full in the face. His nose was almost mashed.

"*À mort!*" yelled the disappointed onlookers who had not been able to edge in close enough to land a few punches of their own. "Kill him!"

They had a grand time. They beat Hassan's face out of shape and tore his clothes to shreds before they were driven off by a mixed squad of policemen, *gendarmes* and soldiers.

SO OF THE EVENTS which ensued during the next couple of hours Hassan was blissfully unconscious. He floated away, back to his hills, back to his own village perched high above a dark gorge where a torrent roared over smooth boulders. And in his dream he seemed to be expostulating with his master, the Kaid Muhammad ibn Djorfa.

He heard himself saying:

"Have you ever stopped to wonder what good you will accomplish by throwing away my life? The French have a hundred colonels to take Louchet's place. One more, one less—it is a little thing to them."

The kaid's voice rolled in his ears:

"You have failed, Hassan. You did not strike a blow though you took the seven-fold oath that there would be no failure. May your name be accursed—"

Then the kaid's words were lost in a vast hubbub which filled the whole dark sky, and a pin point of intolerable light shone in Hassan's eyes.

The world rocked dizzily and as he struggled to keep himself from being hurled into nothingness a torrent of water struck him full in the face.

He sat up, gurgling. A *sergent de ville*, swinging an empty bucket at the end of his arm, grinned down at him.

"*Imchi!*" said the policeman. "Come along, you wild hyena. Get up!"

Hassan's heart missed a beat. He was in a narrow cubicle with leprous yellow walls. There were heavy iron bars on the window. He was in prison. The word seared itself in his brain. Prison. His first impulse was to leap to his feet and go on fighting, but when he stirred, stabbing flashes of pain shot through him. Every bone in his body felt as though it were

broken. There was something the matter with his right eye. The lid was so swollen and sore that he could not force it open.

"It is written," he told himself. "It was written from the very beginning. I have failed and must die. It is good that I should die."

He resigned himself to his fate. They would not get a whimper out of him.

"Didn't you hear what I said?" the policeman demanded, banging the bucket against the soles of Hassan's feet. "I'm telling you to get up. The *commissaire* is waiting for you. You'd better hurry, I'm warning you. Hustle!"

He dragged Hassan down a long corridor into a brightly lighted room where a man seated behind a high desk was arguing violently with Poulot's father. In the background some policemen lounged on a bench beneath a plaster cast bust of Marianne, the symbolic figure of the Third French Republic. There were fly specks on her nose. Dust had collected on her cheek bones. She looked as though she had been out on a wild party.

Hassan was too numb and sick to pay much attention to his surroundings. He expected no mercy from the infidel dogs. His one hope was that they would kill him swiftly instead of keeping him cooped up in their prison.

The man behind the desk was very angry. Sentences popped out of his mouth like bullets from a machine gun. Every time Poulot's father tried to speak he shut him up by banging a paper weight on the desk.

"This sort of thing is intolerable," he declared. "It is against all law and order. Mob rule, that's what it is. I ought to have you locked up. Accusing this man of theft!" He flung out one hand, palm upward. "That is your handiwork. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"I thought—" began Poulot's father.

Down came the paper weight.

"What you thought is immaterial, monsieur! Carelessly you accused this unfortunate creature of theft. One can tell at a glance that he comes from the back country. He is perplexed by his new environment. Is it a wonder that he loses his head when you call him a robber? Suppose you, monsieur, were walking through the streets of a foreign city and were accused of having stolen from a small child; would you retain all your composure?"

"He knocked me down—"

"Of course he did. And he was lynched for it. I have no patience with you, monsieur. None. We have a duty to perform toward such people. What impression will he have of our culture and our civilization after this affair?"

"They ought to be kept behind bars," declared Poulot's father. "They have no right to be let loose in our streets. I pay taxes, Monsieur le Commissaire, I am a good citizen and when I see—"

"And you'll pay this man fifty francs damages, or I shall see myself compelled to enter a charge against you," retorted the magistrate. "Another time you will not be tempted to act so impulsively." Down came the paper weight. "Fifty francs!"

Poulot's father paid. Hassan was hustled up to the desk. The commissaire spoke to him in a soothing, kindly voice, gave him the money, waved him away and started shouting at Poulot's father all over again.

A door swung open. The policeman gave Hassan a good natured kick. He found himself standing in the lamplit street, alone, a free man.

Scenting a trap, he stood stock still, waiting for his enemies to pounce upon him again and rend him fiendishly to pieces. A minute went by; then another. The street was deserted. Nothing stirred. He shuddered as the night wind whipped through the holes in his tattered *jellaba*. After awhile he took two steps away from the door, stopped and peered back over his shoulder. The door remained tight closed. Two more steps. Still no hint of danger.

All at once he realized that nothing was going to happen. His Oriental fatalism deserted him. He gave one wild cackle of laughter, flung the fifty francs into the

gutter and hurried away as fast as his aching limbs would carry him.

He was beyond all amazement. If at that moment he had been told that he had strayed on to some other planet he would not have been particularly surprised. Even the moon riding above the flat rooftops looked different from the moon he knew. A nightmare feeling of helplessness dulled his senses. He walked straight ahead.

He came to a broad, tree lined avenue lighted as bright as day. Glaring shop fronts dazzled his eyes. Behind a plate glass window he was startled to see a female leering at him. She wore a Japanese kimono open down the front to display a pair of bright pink corsets. A little farther on, behind another shop window, he beheld three golden haired children with horribly fat red cheeks. One of them was dressed in a sailor suit. Hassan reached out hungrily to grab it by the throat, and cracked his knuckles on the glass.

Muttering curses under his breath, he limped on his way to nowhere. When he reached the end of the avenue he went on down a steep, crooked street, dim and silent.

HE CAME at last to the waterfront, a grim neighborhood echoing with the muffled clamor of machines. There wasn't a soul in sight. Shuttered houses lined one side of the street; on the other there was a high wall. He dragged himself over to the wall and hunkered down, burying his head on his folded arms. In two seconds he was fast asleep.

He was snoring out of a wide open mouth when Monsieur Hypolite Boullon and the dock guard blundered into him.

Monsieur Boullon flashed an electric torch in his face.

"Ah-ha!" he exclaimed. "What did I tell you, my old Armand? Here he is, as large as life. The rascal! But they're all the same, these brutes. One has to watch them closely. Every time I reach Oran with a batch of laborers the same thing happens. They go wild. A fat lot they care about the teaching of their holy Koran!"

The dock guard rolled Hassan over on his back.

"You're sure he's your man?" he inquired, resting his hands on his knees as he bent down to look at the sleeper. "*Bon Dieu!* He's a mess. His own mother wouldn't know him. He looks as though a truck hit him."

"Of course I'm sure," Monsieur Boullon asserted. "I never forget a face. That's my business, remembering faces. As true as I'm standing here that's No. 5384, Belali ibn Tadla. He's from the village of Beni-Unif, twenty kilometers south of Tlemcen, if you must know. When I recruited him you wouldn't think butter would melt in his mouth. And now gaze upon the swine! Drunk, fight, sleep—that's the effect Oran has on 'em. I told the fool not to break ranks. If I told him once I told him twenty times, but it never does any good."

"He isn't wearing an identification tag," the guard pointed out, pulling aside the rags on Hassan's chest. "You know, Monsieur Boullon, I don't doubt your word, but a mistake is easily made."

Boullon sighed and shrugged his shoulders. He could not afford to waste time in discussion. He had reached Oran that morning with a gang of fifty natives whom he had contracted to deliver on a certain date to the Briffault Automobile Works at Billancourt. The ship sailed in half an hour. One of his men had gone astray. He knew perfectly well that Hassan was not the man he had lost; on the other hand he knew equally well that the harbor guard had an itching palm.

He took out his wallet and extracted a number of bills which he slipped into the guard's hand.

"Of course, one can't be too careful," he confessed. "Some contractors would shanghai the first man they came across, but I'm opposed to such practises. Now this fellow, Belali, I'd spot him a mile away. The identification tag doesn't mean a thing. He's been fighting and

somebody tore the tag off his neck. I'm very grateful to you for your assistance, my old Armand—"

"I don't doubt your word, Monsieur Boullon," the guard admitted, stuffing the notes in his pocket. "And I'm always glad to help you. If you're sure of yourself that settles it."

He shook Hassan by the shoulder.

"Come on, you drunken loafer. Shake up your fleas. Up you get!"

Hassan opened his one sound eye. He saw a man in uniform bending over him. The natural conclusion was that he was being arrested all over again. He was not at all surprised.

Utterly indifferent to his surroundings, he lurched along between his captors. They led him into an infernal region where strange things made of shining metal hissed and rattled as he went by. At last, hours later so it seemed to him, he was pushed down an iron ladder into a dimly lighted cavern with iron walls and an iron floor which rang underfoot. Many men were cooped up in this narrow space. They groaned in their sleep. A ceiling lamp covered with a metal grille threw blurred lights on their haggard features.

"This," Hassan told himself, "is the true prison. My name is accursed among mine own people. May the One True God send me a speedy death."

He lay down and slept. When he awoke the prison was rocking as no self-respecting prison should rock. The motion made him seasick.

III

IT WAS the agitator who put the idea into Hassan's head. The man, a ferret faced creature with a mole on the side of his nose, swaggered into the Café du Levant and ordered a *coup de rouge* in a brassy voice, which grated in the ears of every man in the room.

The night shift from the Briffault Automobile Works had just knocked off, and the café was packed and jammed. With the exception of the *patron*, his wife and the agitator, there were no Europeans in the place. Most of them were North Africans with a sprinkling of coal-black Senegalese and yellow skinned Anamites.

Round shouldered and grimy, they bent over their bowls of steaming coffee. The air was foul with tobacco smoke. Outside a grayish light seeped down through the sooty clouds.

The agitator downed his glass of wine at a gulp. Resting one elbow on the sloppy bar he turned toward the laborers.

"Comrades," he began. "My friends, I am wondering just how much longer you're going to put up with this? You're slaves, every one of you—slaves of the machines which are grinding you down. How long are you going to work for a pittance, while other men grow fat on the products of your labor? Do you ride in the automobiles you make?"

It was the usual argument; the usual stale appeal.

Hassan, during the two years he had spent in France, had listened to the same thing many times. He had heard his employers called capitalists and imperialists and vampires. It was all one to him. He knew most of the speeches by heart, but they had no bearing whatsoever on his daily routine.

Mentally and physically he had become an automaton, living and breathing, eating and sleeping to the rhythm of machines and factory whistles.

Back breaking toil by day, shivering cold at night, squalor and grime; this was his lot. He accepted it unquestioningly. All France, to him, was a factory filled with titanic machines.

He had never once wandered out of the factory district. He dossed in a furnished room with five other laborers. The mattresses were alive with vermin. Dampness had stripped the paper off the walls. Broken window panes were replaced by bits of sacking and old newspapers.

During his leisure hours he drank himself silly on cheap red wine which set his brain on fire. Saturday nights he went to the Cinema-Palace to see Tom Mix and Gloria Swanson.

Once he had killed a man, a half caste

foreman who had grown too friendly with a girl by the name of Justine. Justine was a waitress at the Bar d'Alger. She had sea-green eyes and a broad smile. Two of her lower teeth were missing. Hassan loved her dumbly. One evening he had seen her come out of the Cinema-Palace with the foreman. He waylaid his rival the following night by the banks of the Canal St. Martin and slashed his throat wide open.

He had never gone back to the Bar d'Alger. It was the one incident which had broken the monotony of his two years at hard labor in a Taylorized factory. Not once had he seen a green field, or a clean limbed tree or an unsullied sky. He had forgotten his hills and the warmth of the African sun. The past was dead. And then, quite unexpectedly, something this ferret faced agitator was saying caught his attention.

"It is spring," the man shouted. "Spring—what does that mean to you in this black hell? What is it like back in the country you come from? Is the air full of soot? Is the ground covered with coal dust? No! It's spring, I tell you. Things are growing. Right here in France. I mean it. But you'll never know anything about it. You're shackled to your jobs, you poor gutless fools!

"Take a day off some time and look about you. Go to the Bois de Boulogne—take a walk down the Champs Élysées if you want to see how the rich live. You'll see 'em spending more in ten minutes than you can earn in ten weeks, the very men who brought you to this country and set you to work in their shops. They're wallowing in luxury like hogs in a trough. Sidewalk cafés full of 'em; bands playing for 'em. And the chestnut trees are in bloom for them alone!"

He went on to talk about a general strike which was being organized to protest against the "Moroccan massacres", and he wound up by calling on every man present to contribute something to the cause.

But Hassan was not listening. He had no grudge against his employers. They paid him enough to eat and drink and go to the movies. He expected nothing more.

Long forgotten memories crowded in upon him as he sat, holding his head between his fists, staring at the steaming black coffee in his bowl. He was a thousand miles away, watering his horse at the Bou-Ghirze well. The world was clean and bright and shining. Close at hand a clump of hawthorn bushes was covered with a mass of pink blossoms. The glistening white walls of a *kuba* tucked away among the palm trees were splashed with violet shadows. Barren, rock ribbed hills closed the horizon . . .

Tears filled Hassan's eyes. He gnawed at his lip and smiled, shrugging his shoulders. All that sort of thing was finished and done with. He was civilized now. He looked back upon himself as he had been with amused contempt. Today he was sophisticated and worldly-wise. He went to the movies, he drank and smoked, played cards and wore blue denim overalls like any other self-respecting workingman. Allah, the Koran, and the Prophet Mohammad? They no longer had any meaning. He was proof against such childish superstitions.

But he was hungry for the sight of a real tree. His eyes were tired of staring at dingy walls. He wanted space and light and color . . .

He drank a long swig of scalding hot coffee, spat on the floor, and wiped the back of his hand across his mouth.

"How do you get to this place you're talking about?" he inquired. "This Champs Élysées—how far is it?"

The ferret faced speaker was in the middle of a long winded speech, exhorting the downtrodden races of the earth to arise and throw off the yoke of bondage. Hassan's question annoyed him.

"Take the subway," he snapped. "Get off at L'Étoile. Any fool ought to know that. Now then, comrades," he went on, swinging his arms, "you who have learned to despise and to hate this vicious system . . ."

Hassan finished his coffee and elbowed

his way out of the place. Instead of going to his lodgings he trudged into Paris. For some time he stood wavering at the head of the steps leading down into the subway; then, when he saw a policeman strolling toward him, he took the plunge.

The train roared through the bowels of the earth at a terrifying speed. He was proud of his courage and after the first few minutes he thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of the sensation. In fact, he enjoyed it so much that he rode around under Paris for hours.

WHEN he emerged at L'Étoile it was close on three o'clock. The transition from the ugliness of Billancourt to the spaciousness and beauty of the Champs Élysées filled him with awe. He craned his neck to look up at the man-made mountain called the Arch of Triumph. There were trees and more trees, sweeping in twin green ribbons down the avenue. Magnificent automobiles flashed by, gliding smoothly along on the oily asphalt.

At the foot of the hill the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde swam in a golden haze. All the people were clean and smart and immaculate. Even the policemen were different; their silver buttons were brighter, their uniforms fitted more snugly. And the women tripping by on high heeled shoes were prettier and more alluring than anything Hassan's brain had ever conceived. He shuddered when he thought of his unrequited love for the awful Justine with her frowsy hair and her missing teeth.

"Allah!" he muttered. "To think that I have been missing all this! It is more beautiful than Oran. It is more beautiful than the sultan's gardens at Fez!"

He longed for an automobile of his own, and pearl gray spats and a derby hat. Envy ate into his heart when he saw just such a man as he wanted to be ride by with a beautiful lady at his side.

"If I could make some money," he began. "If I could find some way of making much money—" But his mind was a blank.

He walked down the avenue behind a pair of light amber silk stockings.

When he looked up he was opposite Foullard's famous sidewalk café with its rows of brightly painted wicker chairs and tables, its white coated waiters and its distinguished atmosphere.

Carefree, languid people were chatting at the top of their voices. A waiter went by with a tray laden with ices in frosted silver cups. A headwaiter in full evening dress flicked his napkin at an inquisitive dog.

Hassan stood transfixed.

"If I could sit there," he thought, glancing down at his broken shoes and oil stained pants.

Dragging his heels across thepavement, he moved a little closer to the terrace. He was hypnotized by a lemon water-ice which a stout blonde was shoveling into her bright red mouth.

The headwaiter eyed him suspiciously.

"Hep!" he commanded, flicking his napkin. "No begging. Don't forget, no begging!"

Hassan heard him not. He was trying to imagine what it felt like to be well dressed, and to have a pocketful of money and no work to do.

The headwaiter bore down upon the intruder.

"You're spoiling the scenery," he snapped. "Get away from here, and do it quick! Or do you want me to call a policeman?"

"What's wrong with you?" retorted Hassan, the free citizen of Billancourt. "The street belongs to everybody, doesn't it? I'm not ashamed of my dirty hands. I'm a workingman, I am, and I'm proud of it."

But he wasn't. He would have sold his immortal soul—which he no longer believed in—for a lemon water-ice at Foullard's.

He shuffled away, glaring malevolently over his shoulder at the headwaiter.

Suddenly he stopped dead in his tracks. Out of the tail of his eye he spied a blue uniform, and above the uniform—a face. Louchet's long, flat cheeked face with its

monocle and its scrubby mustache. Colonel Louchet.

Beads of perspiration stood out on Hassan's forehead. His teeth grated together. Hate swept like fire through his veins—hate and envy and fear.

LOUCHET was talking to some one sitting close beside him—a man dressed in a snow-white *burnous*, an Arab. Hassan wheeled around. The Arab was bending over, shielding a match between his cupped hands. Between his lips he held a cigaret. A whiff of blue smoke drifted away on the warm breeze. The Arab looked up.

A queer, strangled cry welled up in Hassan's throat. He was staring straight into the face of his chief, the Kaid Muhammad ibn Djorfa. He wiped his hand across his eyes. But the kaid was still there. Sleek, full fed and contented, Muhammad sprawled in his chair, smiling dreamily through a haze of cigaret smoke.

Beneath his *burnous* he wore a gold embroidered vest and baggy trousers of the finest muslin. His feet were encased in top boots of soft leather dyed a brilliant shade of red. Rings flashed on his fingers.

His neighbors craned their necks to look at him. He returned their stares with bland complacency. Whenever he caught the eye of a pretty woman he winked at her. Many of these ladies favored him with professional, but none the less entrancing, smiles.

He was one of the numerous chieftains who had found it to their advantage to make peace with the magnanimous French nation. He had been compelled to capitulate after a terrible winter of starvation and slow death. And instead of being humiliated by his foes he had been welcomed like a long lost friend.

Within a month he was helping the French subdue neighboring clans who were too stupid to see the light. The cross of the Legion of Honor had been conferred upon him the following year for his "invaluable cooperation in the cause of peace and civilization," as Louchet had called it. A little later, while he was still glowing with self-righteousness, he had been wafted across to France so that he might gain some first hand knowledge of his allies' country.

He had shaken hands with a cabinet minister, seen cannons forged at Schneider's, gambled at Deauville, launched a new destroyer, and listened to the moaning saxophones in the Montmartre cabarets. His one regret was that he had not come to terms with the French twenty years earlier.

But Hassan knew nothing of these events which had changed the destiny of a people.

Muhammad ibn Djorfa, defender of the Faith, sitting beside Colonel Louchet? It was an obscene joke, an hallucination in a sick, tormented mind. Hassan dug his nails into the palms of his hands. By degrees his stupor gave way to a cold, murderous rage. He had been tricked. While he sweated his life away in a gray wilderness of machines, Muhammad had been living on the fat of the land. Perhaps—who could tell?—he had been deliberately sacrificed . . .

"For the last time," he heard the headwaiter say. "If you don't move on I'll call a *flic*. We don't need your fleas around here."

Something snapped inside Hassan's brain. Before any one could stop him he crashed in among the tables and chairs, treading on delicate toes, spilling cocktails over carefully creased trousers. In three strides he stood before the kaid.

"Muhammad!" he snarled. "Thou dog!"

There were no explanations. The kaid tried to stand up. A blow full in the mouth sat him down again. Crushed against his lips the smoldering butt of his cigaret singed his perfumed mustache. He let out a shrill yelp.

"Here!" shouted Colonel Louchet. "Stand back! What the devil does this mean?"

But there was no holding Hassan.

He caught up a siphon and brought it crashing down on the kaid's head.

Muhammad's *burnous* became streaked with crimson. He toppled over sidewise.

A woman fainted noisily.

Hassan wheeled upon the colonel. He looked for another weapon, found none—hurled himself at his enemy's throat.

A sheet of flame scorched his eyeballs. He was deafened by a shattering explosion. A hot stab of pain tore through his lungs. An unseen hand caught hold of his shoulder and spun him round and round. All jumbled together he saw the green trees and the Arch of Triumph and the sunlit buildings. Blurred faces swept past him. Then the hand let go and he plunged forward into a cold and empty darkness.

He awoke in the hospital ward of the Santé prison. It was not a pleasant place to wake up in. A municipal guard sat in the doorway with a carbine propped against his thigh. A Little Sister of Mercy with a waxen, expressionless face, dressed Hassan's wound. He recovered slowly.

In due course of time the judiciary machine dealt with his case. Day in and day out, for weeks on end, he was closeted in a stuffy room with several fussy, short tempered men who shot questions at him.

He refused to speak. He didn't even bother to contradict the kaid when the latter (with the fear of God in his heart) swore he knew nothing of the prisoner's antecedents. Colonel Louchet did not appear. He had gone back to Africa. His written testimony was read into the record by a clerk with a whining, nasal voice. It was all nonsense to Hassan. Outside the thick walls of the Palace of Justice it was midsummer. Through the dirty window panes he could see the tops of trees and a strip of pale blue sky. His mind was far away.

The examining magistrate abandoned the unequal contest. He sent Hassan up for trial before the correctional court at the opening of the autumn assizes. Three red robed, red hatted judges looked down upon Hassan. A young lawyer, supposed to be defending the prisoner, waved his arms about and made a witty speech dealing with the dangers of religious fanaticism. The judges conferred. Hassan was sentenced to a year behind the bars on a charge of assault and battery.

Afterward he was ordered to be deported.

IV

THE *Lamoricière* docked at Oran early in the morning.

Down the gangplank, after the other passengers had landed, filed the deportees—waste material cast aside by the mills and factories of France.

Most of these men were burdened down beneath the weight of ungainly bundles crammed with the shoddy stuff they had bought overseas. But Hassan stepped ashore empty handed. Everything he possessed was on his back. He looked remarkably swell. Even the *gendarmes* standing on the pier, checking off the herd, were startled by his appearance.

He wore a pink shirt and a pink collar. His ready made bow tie was a delicate shade of mauve. No amount of coal dust and dirt could hide the superlatively fine color of his check suit. His shoes were of black patent leather with yellow cloth tops. A battered derby was cocked over his right eyebrow. He had bought the entire outfit for twenty-seven francs and fifty centimes from an old clothes dealer at the prison gates, and he was proud of it.

There was nothing uncouth about him now. He looked, every inch of him, the man about town. At least he thought so, which amounts to the same thing. Mentally, too, he had undergone a great change. He was no longer a drifter. Ambition, that last great sin of all great men, had entered into his soul while he lay night after night, sleepless, on his prison cot. He knew exactly what he wanted to do. His mind was clear and hard and unswerving.

Society—he had picked up the dear old catch phrase from his fellow workers—society owed him a living. He meant to go out and take all he could get. The

French, who had made him suffer, were going to pay.

With a light, jaunty step he filed past the *gendarmes*. They looked him over with unconcealed mistrust. Long experience had taught them to detest Europeanized natives. The local jails were full of such wrong headed, vicious minded creatures.

One of the *gendarmes* leaned over and clamped his blunt fingers on the nape of Hassan's neck.

"You," he rasped, "listen here. I don't like your looks, you louse. I know you're a bad actor. You're going to get into trouble, but you won't go far. I'll be on the lookout for you, and at the first break you make I'll be on your tracks, with *this* in my hand."

"This" was an automatic in a black leather holster. He smacked it with the flat of his hand.

Three years earlier Hassan would have been paralyzed by such a threat. Now it did not worry him in the least. He knew how to deal with *gendarmes*.

"The best thing for you to do," the trooper went on, "is to go home—back to your own dunghill. Where do you come from?"

"Saïda," lied Hassan.

"Where are you headed for now?"

"Saïda."

"What are you going to do when you get there?" He tightened his grip on Hassan's neck. "Answer me—quick!"

"Farmer," explained Hassan. "I shall work in the vineyards."

"Maybe so. I don't believe you. If I find you in Oran after sundown today I'll clap you straight into a cell."

Inwardly Hassan smiled at the threat. If ever he met that *gendarme* again he would have a gun in his hand. They would never get him alive . . .

The *gendarme* gave him a shove and, as a reminder of the majesty of the law, kicked him in the seat of his pants.

It was the last official contact between Hassan and the Law for quite some time.

A quarter of an hour later he reached Yacub abd el Suleiman's shop in the Street of the Butchers. The street was almost deserted for the market closed down before the heat of the day. On the stalls lining the way glassy eyed goats' heads and hunks of meat, which had not tempted the early morning buyers, were black with flies. A breath of corruption filled the air.

Hassan, strolling along with his hands in the pockets of his coat, found Yacub sitting on the doorstep of his shop, studying the army meat contract tenders in the *Éclair Oranais*.

Fatter than ever, his belly spilling out over his thighs, Yacub looked prosperous and contented.

"*Alors, ça boulotte?*" inquired Hassan in his best Billancourt French. "How goes it, friend Yacub, this fine morning?"

Yacub laid his paper on his knees and looked hard at the newcomer.

"Well?" he snapped. "What is it?"

"You know me," grinned Hassan. "Remember the wild Beni-Yuffizi who came to you one day with five hundred dourous in his hand."

Yacub glanced quickly up and down the street. He crumpled the newspaper between his hands.

"I thought I had seen you somewhere—and I told you not to come back."

"But I am back." Hassan smiled. "I want a few words with you in private."

"No," Yacub said deliberately. "No. That is over and done with. It is too dangerous. As Allah is my witness, I am a law abiding man."

"Allah?" jeered Hassan. "I know nothing about such tales of ghosts and spirits. And the law of the French is none of my concern either."

Yacub scratched his beard.

"You have changed," he admitted. "But you are not alone. Everything has changed. The Beni-Yuffizi have surrendered."

"I know." The two words came like bullets from Hassan's lips.

Yacub's bovine calm deserted him. He shifted his position uneasily.

"Then what do you want?" he demanded. "I have nothing to fear. I am an

honest man. Who has sent you to spy on me? Louchet? *Tchal* You are worse than an infidel! Go away, I tell you, go away!"

"I have no time to waste," Hassan retorted. "Get up, Yacub. It is an order."

Yacub opened his mouth to speak, but he said not a word, for he had just caught sight of the blunt muzzle of a revolver pointing straight at his head through the cloth of Hassan's coat pocket.

HEAVING himself to his feet, he led the way through the fly infested shop into a back room with heavily shuttered windows. He switched on an unshaded electric light hanging by a wire from the ceiling. Hassan closed the door. The key grated in the lock.

"I do not want much," he explained. "I want five thousand francs, and two good automatics and two hundred rounds of ammunition. That is all."

"I am a poor man!" protested Yacub, wringing his hands. "What little I have is in the bank. I could give you a check. You know what that is—a check? You go to the big building on the Square. They will give you the money."

"Cash. No checks. And two automatics; the big ones with the short muzzles —and two hundred cartridges."

"I swear—"

"No, you don't, Yacub. You are going to do as I say. If not I shall kill you."

"But what—what is it for? What do you want to do?"

"Make the French suffer as I have suffered," Hassan snarled. "Drive them out of this land—our land—the land they conquered by force, which they hold by force, which violence and force, and nothing but violence and force, can wrench from their hands."

"Others have tried—"

"And failed, because we are divided; because among us there is no loyalty, no trust, no honor; because we are smothered by our dead and stinking past; because our faith is old and shallow; because the French for a hundred years have kept us in ignorance. Have we any doctors, or men of science, or engineers trained in their schools? Where are they? They cackle about liberty and fraternity and equality! For themselves—not for us. There isn't an Arab mayor or an Arab counsellor or an Arab deputy—but there are Arab soldiers ready to shoot down other Arabs in the sacred name of their filthy liberty! We're cheap labor for their mills, and cheap fodder for their guns."

His words filled the room. They rang like iron against the dingy whitewashed walls.

But Yacub shook his head.

"All that," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "all that may be true, but you are alone, one against thousands. You are a child, Hassan, a foolish, unruly child. You want to go out with two guns in your pockets and conquer North Africa!" He laughed nervously. "It is a great madness. They will shoot you down as though you were a wild beast. Not even your own clan will fight for you."

"Then I shall fight against them!"

"It is so stupid. They are not so bad, the French. They have brought peace and order. There is no starvation even for the very poor. A merchant can travel unarmed from Oran to Algiers, from Tunis to Figuig."

"Shut up!" Hassan broke in. "Give me what I need. There has been too much talk."

Heavy footed and slow, Yacub waddled across the room toward some wooden crates stacked in the far corner of the room.

"Five thousand francs," he mumbled. "It is robbery. Why come to me? Why not take it from the French?"

"That will come later. You sold information to the French while you sold guns to my people. You can afford to pay."

It was a shrewd thrust. Yacub's flabby face turned gray and his hands shook.

"You lie! You know you lie!"

Hassan laughed at him, a mirthless bark of a laugh.

"Make haste, Yacub! My finger grows stiff on the trigger."

Yacub flung open the lid of one of the crates. Grunting, he bent down and fumbled about in the straw. He fished out one gun, then another.

"If you value your life," cautioned Hassan, "hold them by the muzzle."

Yacub dropped the weapons on the grease stained table.

"Now the money," he grumbled. "*Inch'-Allah!* It is a fortune!"

He slid one hand inside the folds of his *haik*.

"Stop!" ordered Hassan. "I don't trust you. Stand against the wall. Put your hands above your head. I'll find the money."

He tore open the flimsy garment from neckband to waist. Tucked inside Yacub's cummerbund he found a thick wad of notes and a knife in a leather sheath.

As he reached for the roll of bills Yacub came to life. He put every ounce of his strength and power into one smashing blow, which crammed Hassan's derby hat down over his ears and sent him reeling back against the table.

Bellowing with rage, Yacub lumbered after him with surprising agility. He caught Hassan in his arms, enfolding him in a bearlike hug and squeezed, squeezed, squeezed until Hassan's eyes started from his head and his ribs began to crack.

"Jackal!" panted Yacub, his face close to Hassan's face.

It was the last word he spoke.

At pointblank range Hassan pumped six bullets into his stomach. He dropped to his knees, swayed drunkenly for a second or so, then fell forward, flattening his face on the mud floor.

Whiffs of acrid blue smoke curled upward around the electric bulb. When he stopped coughing Hassan sat down on the edge of the table and examined the cloth of his coat pocket. It was charred and damaged beyond repair. He cut away the burned fragments with the point of Yacub's knife. Afterward, without haste, he helped himself to the things he needed, turned out the light and left the room.

On the threshold, before he ventured out into the street, he smoothed the bumps out of his derby and brushed it carefully on his coat sleeve.

THE POLICE authorities who investigated the murder were able to trace the supposed culprit all the way across town to the Rue Edgar Quinet. There, however, they lost his track, for the Jew tailor who supplied Hassan with a brand new outfit had no desire whatsoever to be mixed up in any criminal case.

Hassan, the Hassan of the greasy derby and loud check suit, vanished into thin air . . .

But an Arab gentleman dressed in a black riding suit of semi-military cut, with a pale yellow *burnous* draped over his shoulders, boarded the 12.23 P.M. train for Udjda.

His subsequent movements did not attract the attention of the administration for several weeks. A secret agent of the Intelligence Service informed his chiefs that an unidentified native had made a venomous attack upon the French at the Hadj-el Baroud mosque on the day of the Rahmadan. Little importance was attached to this happening, for religious fanaticism always reached fever pitch toward the end of the yearly fast.

Nevertheless, as a precautionary measure, the secret agent was instructed to find out something more definite about the speech maker's antecedents. The agent was discovered three days later huddled up in a corner of the camel park outside the city gates. His hands were bound behind his back; his tongue had been torn out. There were two bullet holes in his chest. Pinned on his chest was a strip of paper bearing the word "spy" in French, Arabic and Berber.

A mild ripple of interest swept through the offices of the Intelligence Department of the Udjda Military District.

"Tut, tut!" remarked the senior officer. "This is really most unfortunate. We must find out something about this fellow. Where is he now? Does anybody know?"

Nobody knew; but they soon found out.

Before a week had gone by a squad of *gendarmes*, riding home through the dusk along the Taza road, was ambushed and massacred less than ten miles from barracks. The only trooper who lived long enough to answer a few questions spoke of a short, wiry man in a black uniform who had walked leisurely about, smoking innumerable cigarets, while his followers collected the *gendarmes'* equipment and stabbed the wounded to death.

Still the district commander refused to treat the matter seriously. Such incidents are bound to occur in the best of protectorates.

"It is the work of brigands," said the district commander. "It has no military significance. We have implicit faith in the loyalty and good will of the population."

The victims of this unspeakable outrage were given a splendid funeral, complete with muffled drums and reversed arms and graveside orations.

The next day a reward of one thousand francs was posted in the streets of Udjda for any information leading to the capture, dead or alive, of the gang leader.

The latter retaliated by putting a bullet through the windshield of the commander's automobile. A piece of flying glass sliced his jugular vein. He died messily, spilling his life blood over the white trousers of his aide-de-camp.

The news made the front page of the Paris papers, for the commander happened to be a brigadier-general. The press burst into a chorus of indignant protests. Morocco, yelled the scribes, was in an open state of rebellion. They accused the responsible authorities of gross mismanagement and treasonable incompetence. Alive, they would have damned the general; dead, they made a martyr of him.

At question time in the Chamber of Deputies the wild men of the extreme left demanded the instant evacuation of Morocco, while the extreme right insisted upon the immediate punishment of the culprits and large scale military operations to make the Tafilalet range as safe as the Boulevard des Capucines.

The ministry fell. The head of the Intelligence Department at Udjda was placed on the retired list. There was a general upheaval all along the line, but of the district commander's assassin the best brains in the service could find neither hide nor hair.

While the commotion was at its height he was traveling through the foothills, building up a reputation and increasing his personal following. Rumors of his activities sped back to headquarters, for his success was immediate. He had more color and fire than any leader who had cropped up in North Africa since the glamourous days of Abdel Kader.

From the mosques and marketplaces of the border towns to the lonely wells at the "back of beyond" where the shepherds meet, he carried his message of hate and hope and war. He spoke with a passionate fury which swept men headlong into rebellion. Unity and brotherhood were his watchwords—the brotherhood of all Islam against the infidel; the unity of tribes long divided by petty quarrels.

He did more than talk.

During the early stages of his rise to power his military importance may not have been very great, but there was a sensational quality about everything he did which fanned the enthusiasm of his followers to a white heat and reduced the French authorities to the verge of nervous prostration.

TRAVELING fast, traveling light, with never more than two hundred men at his heels, he raised merry hell all along the lines of communication, looting, burning, killing within sight and sound of the cities of the Mahgreb.

He could not be explained away or censored out of existence. Other rebel chieftains, far more dangerous than he, were considerate enough to confine their activities to the remote back areas, where they could be handled without attracting

the attention of the outside world. Hassan, however, went to the other extreme, carrying his feud down into the supposedly pacified districts where the crackle of rifle fire had not been heard for years.

After he had laid waste several warehouses and granaries belonging to important concerns dependent upon even more important banks, the overseas press gave him almost unlimited space. It magnified every one of his raids until they read like the death-knell of French supremacy.

One of the highlights of his career, which brought him columns of publicity, was the wrecking of a troop train carrying a battalion of Senegalese Tirailleurs toward the non-existent "front". He spilled the train into a ravine, captured four machine guns and more ammunition and rifles than he could carry away.

The clamor was such that the resident general was recalled and the commander-in-chief resigned. Hassan could no longer be called a brigand or a marauder and dismissed with a contemptuous shrug. Overnight he became a Threat to the Peace of the Protectorate. Troops were pumped into the territory at considerably more expense than the original thousand francs offered for his capture.

Long, slow moving columns crawled across the countryside, hunting blindly for a quarry more elusive than a will-o'-the-wisp.

A puff of dust on the horizon, a clatter of hoofs through the night, a gust of lead singing shrilly down some rocky slope—and he was gone, and the long chase began again up hill and down dale, from Taza to Bou-Dnenib, and all the way back to the gates of Udjda.

He knew no fear. While ten thousand men were on his track and a swarm of spies hunted for him, he slipped into Fez to harangue the scholars at the Medrahsa. Three days elapsed before peace could be restored throughout the city, and by that time he was a hundred miles away, stirring up trouble among the Atlas tribes.

Adherents flocked to his standards from every district of Morocco. They came, too, from Tunis and Egypt and Syria, and his fame grew and spread, and more troops poured into the country through a long wet winter which held them glued to their bases while the Threat to the Peace of the Protectorate gathered his forces together and prepared for another campaign.

To increase his revenue during the rainy season he kidnapped a deputy, a famous corporation lawyer, a Belgian journalist and a carload of assorted tourists.

They netted him a little over two million francs gold and made him an international figure. After their release they told the world about the Kaid Hassan el Hadoub—the man who had roused Islam from its age long sleep.

"He lives simply and frugally," wrote the Belgian journalist, "sharing the hardships of his disciples, eating the same meager food. He wears a black uniform, threadbare and earth stained, and a weather worn *burnous* which once was yellow . . . He speaks excellent French, but I could not find out where he learned it. While we were his prisoners he was courteous but firm. His consuming ambition is to restore the freedom of his country and wipe out all trace of our civilization which he professes to hate. What his ultimate fate will be the future alone can decide."

But the French had a great deal to say about the future. When spring came they were ready to deal with the Kaid Hassan. The plains of the Mahgreb were rimmed with bayonets. Barbed wire filled the passes. There was no more blind groping after a tricky, fast moving foe, no more attempts to strike a quick blow which would put an end to the nuisance.

Step by step Hassan found himself driven back. No longer could he work his way through the blockade to pull off one of his spectacular forays. He tried it once, and left three hundred of his best men behind. It was his first contact with whippet tanks, and it left him with a very bad taste in his mouth.

After that he confined his activities to broken, boulder strewn ground where the steel monsters could not follow. But he still believed in himself and in his cause, and his faith was unshaken.

To wipe out his defeat he turned about and struck at his own clan, the Beni-Yuffizi. They swung over to his cause after he had slashed off Muhammad ibn Djorfa's head and stuffed his cross of the Legion of Honor into his gaping mouth. He gained a thousand well equipped warriors at one stroke, but the sands in his glass were running low.

The columns moved in behind him, gaining a mile here and a mile there, working in around his flanks. Their advance guards could be shot to pieces, their convoys could be destroyed; but they reformed and came on: ponderous, unwieldy and inexorable, tentacles of steel writhing up through the valleys, reaching over the hills, closing in, hour by hour closing in around him.

And his plans went wrong. He had seen too big. Too many things he had hoped for did not happen. There were no uprisings in the cities to distract the French and give him a breathing spell. His power made smaller men jealous when they found that at one stroke he did not roll the French back into the sea.

The great mass of his adherents still trusted him implicitly, but among the chieftains whom he overshadowed there was a growing tendency to question his orders. He could not hold them all. They drifted away, a few men at a time, and their going made gaps in his ranks—gaps through which the tentacles of steel thrust their way.

HE LACKED the skill to handle large bodies of men. There was a scarcity of food and fodder and ammunition. By degrees the initiative slipped from his grasp. Almost before he was aware of it he was fighting on the defensive. And as his dwindling force rolled southward, buffeted and battered at every step, he found himself encircled, pinned down and forced to fight.

The end came quite suddenly. The steel jaws of the trap snapped shut while he bivouacked by the spring in the valley of Ain-Zabeg. During the night the watchmen called him, and he saw the flicker of camp-fires far away on the trail he had traveled. When he looked in the opposite direction, down the trail he meant to follow the next day, he saw other camp-fires, glowing like red stars.

"*Mektoub!*" he said. "It is written. Tomorrow we shall fight."

And he, who had ceased to believe, went down on his knees, raising clenched fists toward the dark sky, and prayed to his Maker.

At daybreak he was ready. He had no definite plan. Like a cornered animal his one idea was to hurl himself upon his foe and fight, and if needs be die with his nails driven into a Frenchman's throat. At that moment he hated his conquerors as never before, and some of his fierce passion spread to his empty bellied, blear eyed men.

Massed in front of the spring, standing by their horses in the long blue shadows of early morning, they waited to launch themselves, a living, thundering, battering ram against the French columns. But the columns moved forward warily, spread out behind a screen of scouts.

Two miles from the oasis they came to a halt. Their ranks parted. Out into the open at a hand gallop swung two batteries of 75's.

Hassan saw the teams slither to a standstill in a smother of dust. When the dust cleared he saw twelve gray painted guns squatting low on the plain.

He laughed as he gathered up his reins.

"Fools," he cried, "they would frighten us with those little things." He raised his sword above his head, and the curved blade flashed in the sunlight. "Now is our time to strike! Ride!"

As he spoke a long tongue of flame leaped from the right hand gun. Something screamed through the air and the

horses shied as a woolly ball of smoke appeared against the sky. Shrapnel lashed the close packed ranks as they lumbered forward.

They had no time to acquire any momentum. All twelve guns opened up, firing at two thousand meters, over open sights, pouring a deluge of shrapnel and high explosive into the milling, panic stricken mob. It was not a battle but a murder.

Twice Hassan rallied his men, gathering them out of the swirling hell through which they lurched, and tried to ride down upon the guns. Twice he was stopped and smothered. A sleet of machine gun bullets drove him back when he tried to outflank the guns. It went on for hours, or it may have been minutes. He never knew. It went on until the earth was carpeted with shattered things that had been strong men and willing horses, which the shells churned up again and again into a red, wet, nameless horror.

And then, abruptly, when the earth itself seemed to dissolve beneath the impact of the shells, the drum fire ceased.

An officer mounted on a high stepping stallion trotted forward.

"There has been enough killing," he called out. "Will you lay down your arms and surrender? We offer you peace and mercy. If the kaid still lives let him speak."

Hassan looked at the dead, and he looked at the living crouching behind shattered tree trunks.

"Will ye fight or surrender?" he asked them.

A gaunt ruffian staggered to his feet.

"We have followed you and trusted you," he declared. "We shall follow you now to the very gates of hell if you so wish it."

"Aye," said Hassan, nodding his head, "but I do not wish it. We can not fight their machines with our flesh and our blood. They have drowned us in a bath of steel. It is over, until we, too, have such machines."

He walked out alone, empty handed, toward the French officer.

"I am the Kaid Hassan," he explained. "My beard is in your hands, *roumi*. Let there be no more fighting."

Now the French handle such situations with a great deal of tact. Two companies of the Foreign Legion presented arms as he walked past their ranks toward the general's tent, and a brass band greeted him with the mighty strains of the *Marseillaise*.

The pomp and ceremony made him feel a little less depressed.

Inside the tent he was received by a gray bearded, fatherly general, and an old acquaintance, Colonel Louchet. The latter, however, though he peered hard through his monocle, did not recognize the prisoner.

Stony faced and indifferent, Hassan waited for the sentence of death; but instead of having him shot the general offered him a cup of steaming hot, mint flavored tea. There was no poison in it, either.

The general, who spoke excellent Arabic, talked about the weather and the scenic beauty of the hills and other irrelevant matters before he got down to business.

"You have bothered us a great deal," he said at last. "Your—ah—ascendency over the tribes has been, I confess, enormous. Unprecedented, in fact. Unprecedented! Of course, I admire—*we* admire —" he nodded toward Louchet— "your skill as a fighter and an organizer, but I am sorry to say, we can not tolerate the —ah—imminent danger of a renewal of such a menace to our peaceful development of this territory, if you follow my meaning."

Hassan made no pretense of following the general's meaning.

"I am ready to die," he declared.

"But we do not kill our prisoners." The general smiled. "You have made an honorable surrender. We struck hard because we—ah—find that such methods are kindest in the long run. Artillery—very efficacious, is it not? Now, we are ready to forgive, although we can not altogether forget; not yet awhile." There was a twinkle in his eyes as he spoke.

"Your people, of course, are safe. As soon as they have laid down their arms they will be allowed to go back to their homes. We want to teach them that our rule is just and merciful. We bring peace without oppression . . .

"Your individual case is slightly different," he went on. "I am afraid we can not let you go free—not until you have learned to understand us more thoroughly, not until we are assured that you will use your undoubted influence to promote the welfare of the people of Morocco."

And he pronounced the fateful word "exile".

Hassan bowed his head.

V

THEY were standing outside the Rotisserie Perigourdine, where they had lunched. On the far bank of the Seine the windows of the Palace of Justice reflected the mellow sunshine of a May afternoon.

"And now," said Colonel Louchet, smacking his legs with his riding crop, "now I want to show you one of the most delightful spots in this great city of ours. Have you ever heard of the Champs Élysées?"

Hassan smothered a full fed belch.

"Aye," he said gravely. "The name is indeed familiar, Sidi Colonel. I must have heard it somewhere."

So they climbed into a taxi and rolled past the open air book stalls, past the Institute, up the broad sweep of the Champs Élysées crowned by the Arch of Triumph.

"I don't think you'll find your exile unbearable," remarked the colonel. "Many foreigners seem to find Paris a pleasant place to live in. You will have to report to the police occasionally, but that is a trivial formality. You're going to miss your hills, I suppose, and the hot blast of our African sun. Still—" he shrugged his shoulders—"you'll get used to it in time."

"I shall try, Sidi Colonel," agreed Hassan, craning his neck as he stared up the Avenue. "What can that place be, over yonder, where the people sit?"

"Oh, that? Why, that's Foullard's. We'll stop off if you like. It is a very famous café. I go there quite often."

Minutes later Hassan was seated in a comfortable chair. He sat quite limp, his hands folded in his lap. Through half-closed eyelids he took in his surroundings. Nothing had changed. Nothing! The headwaiter was there, with his napkin over his arm, and the white coated waiters, and the fascinating ladies in their abbreviated skirts. Sumptuous automobiles rolled down the avenue.

He seemed to be awakening from a troubled sleep. This at last was reality. This was what he had hungered for all through the terrible years. Because of this he had hated the French.

A lady stared at him without attempting to disguise her interest. She smiled. Hassan smiled.

A tremulous sigh burst from his lips. He sat up in his chair.

"I think I shall have one of those ices," he said dreamily. "One of the yellow ones in a silver goblet."

STAND BY TO RAM

A Tale of a Tropical Tramp as told by John Leffingwell to

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

"TO ILLUSTRATE my point," remarked the old Tropical Tramp, suiting his action to his words, "the only and proper manner in which to mix a Daiquirí is to take the juice of two wild oranges, add two and a half shots of Bacardí, then one and a half *copitas* of gin; follow this with four spoonfuls of brown sugar and add a dash of Angostura bitters. Place all this in a shaker, with a reasonable amount of ice. Agitate it, sir, and you have a divine ointment, which would also agitate the gods themselves, on famed Olympus, and be fit only for gods and heroes! And speaking of heroes—"

We were reposing in long wicker chairs on the veranda of his *finca* overlooking the jade and turquoise of Siguanea Bay. Far to westward lay Punta Francés, and within its sheltering arm a small American gunboat acting as mother ship for a fleet of noisy seaplanes that had that morning arrived from Panama, *en route* to Key West.

The glimpse of the gunboat stirred a lazy thought in my heat lulled brain.

"Ever see a naval battle?" I asked the Tropical Tramp.

"One," he answered. "And one was enough—for I took part in it. A major part. Very, sir. Very."

Now, the Tropical Tramp knows practically all there is to know about revolutions, wars and rumors of wars, in Latin-America. So I knew a story was coming. I lighted another cigaret and let her come.

"Yep," he presently began, "I was once a naval officer, kind of *pro tem.* And speaking of heroes, as above—well, you can judge for yourself, sir. You see, it happened this way. Whispering Bill Smith had been up the headwaters of the Escondido River, on a rubber prospect We called him Whispering Bill because his usual tone of conversation and pronouncement would carry three to five miles, according to the wind. Kind of a hard trip he'd been having, too. Three

months in the jungle, living on monkey meat and parrot stew, and—

"But never mind. As soon as we lands at Rama, we makes tracks to Chinese Charley's for a real feed of semi-civilized tucker, leaving the Indios to bring up our baggage and traps.

"We finds everything in an uproar, and that doggoned Chinese Charley so excited he can hardly throw a mess of chow together before giving us the gladsome news all in a lump. It seems that Nicaragua has gone to war with Honduras—what for, nobody seems to know; and it don't matter, anyhow, just so there's a nice, sociable war.

"The government is recruiting an army in the good old natural way—rounding up bunches of natives, tying 'em in batches, and shipping 'em down to Bluefields, where they volunteer whether they want to or not. It's an efficient process, sir, and very simple—if you have rope enough.

"After we've cleaned out Charley's place, me and Whispering drifts over to the Bluefield Steamship Company's office, and emits a few queries *re* the next boat downriver. They tells us that the *Bananero* will clear for Bluefields and the Bluff at eight, next A. M, everything else being equal. So we negotiates passages with a little *dinero* and a lot of diplomacy, and beats it back to Charley's for a kink of slumber, with strict orders to be called at six, *mañana*."

"At sailing time we're on the bank, watching the recruits being herded on board. You have never seen the *Bananero*, sir? No, I reckon you couldn't have, because she was burned twenty years ago. Some steamer! She was an old, condemned Mississippi River wheelbarrow boat—sternwheeler, you understand—and she could do more puffing and make less knots than any *embarcación* I ever laid an eye to.

"After the spigs are all stowed, we gets aboard and hunts up old John Evans, the chief, for a quiet little game of draw, just to pass the time away. Evans, he rings in a well-to-do young Americano from down the coast, Limón way. The young Americano is a banana receiver. He soon discovers it is more easy to give than to receive, and when we ties up at the Ballanger Wharf at Bluefields, I'm thirty bucks to the good and Whispering Bill is about eight.

"JUST to show I bears no hard feelings, I asks all hands up to the Tropical Hotel, and we've just got our feet adjusted comfortable on the rail, when in drifts Rivington. This said Rivington is the banana company's manager. As soon as he spots me, he comes over and, kind of private-like, eases me the information that when I've allayed my cravings I'd better undulate right up to his room.

"So I P. D. Q's as soon as I can, without showing any indecent and suspicious haste," continued the Tropical Tramp, sipping his beverage and squinting at the American gunboat. "I oozes up to Rivington's room and taps at his door. After Rivington lets himself be convinced it's only me, he opens, and I'm interjected into the midst of a most distinguished company.

"Beside Rivington, there's Antonio Rivas, the provincial governor; there's Williams, from the mahogany company; Brown from the trading company; and another man, one hundred per cent. stranger to me. They gives me a chair; thrusts a glass into my unwilling hand, and against all my protests fills the glass with nectar and *refresco*. Then they introduces me to the handsome stranger.

" 'This here is Captain Pacifico O'Hara, late of the Chilean Navy, and now commander of the Nicaraguan cruiser *Ometepic*,' says Rivington. 'This here sociable agglomeration of kindred spirits ain't no poker party,' says he, 'but a council of war.'

" 'War?' says I. 'Am I already involved in a fresh and brand new *casus belli*, as the poet says?'

" 'You are,' replies Rivington. 'Quite extensively so. It seems that the Honduran government has secured the services of a cashiered German naval officer,

to command a condemned German gunboat they've just bought. More, and worse, this said gunboat is now at Truxillo, under the Honduran flag, bearing the name of *Tatumbla*. Most, and worst, she is due to sail at any minute, to devastate our noble coasts.'

" 'Bad enough,' says I. 'And what have we, gentlemen, wherewithal to resist the ravages of this sea monster?'

" 'All we have, sir,' says Rivington, 'is the *Ometepic*.'

"No, *amigo*, you have never beheld the *Ometepic*, because she went where all good ships go, a great many years ago. In her prime she was a little thousand-ton boat, built originally for the Louisiana Lottery Company, when they operated in Honduras. They used her to run bootleg lottery tickets into Port Tampa, Florida. She was justly celebrated for two outstanding qualities; speed and unseaworthiness. She could run like hell, sir, and roll far worse than that.

"When the lottery company finally deceased, she was bought by the Nicaraguan government and armed with two pom-pom Nordenfelts on the focsle, a Gatling on the bridge and a nine-inch muzzle loading rifle aft.

"Fired, sir? Was the nine-inch ever fired? Yes, sir, once. Once, when the ship was first fitted out. The experiment was never repeated. That one shot opened up her plates so extensively that she had to go into dry dock at once, and remain quite some time. All in all, she wasn't much of a bulwark of defense, in an emergency like what was now confronting us.

"The council of war puts it straight up to me.

" 'Commander Pacifico O'Hara will run the ship and fight her,' says Rivington, 'but he can't attend to everything. And on account of your experience with machine guns you're elected to take over the Nordenfelts and the Gat, with Whispering Bill as your lieutenant.'

" 'Looks O. K. to me,' says I, 'provided the horrors of crimson war are inevitable.'

" 'They are,' Rivington prognosticates. 'The *Ometepic* positively *must* fight the *Tatumbla* and lick her, or Bluefields will certainly be bombarded. Which can't be permitted on account of the foreign interests involved. And furthermore, if the *Ometepic* is lost, our company will give the government another ship.'

" 'And if we, the bold heroes, are lost?' I insinuates.

" 'Oh, you don't count,' he rebuffs, and forces me to partake of more libations. 'Why interject irrelevant matters into a perfectly good war?'

"It all looks sufficiently actionable and alluring to me, so we discusses the pros and consequences till nearly morning, when the *junta* breaks up with instructions for me to take Whispering and report *pronto* on board, to overhaul gear.

"WE BOARDS her, sir, and looks over her hardware. Much to our surprise we finds it in strictly A-1 condition. This Chilean Irishman evidently knows his stuff, because the entire ship is in bang-up shape. No, sir, I do *not* mean ready to explode. I mean first class and all O. K, from truck to keelson. Which, in those latitudes, is somewhat of a novelty.

"We at once selects our gun crews from the spigs available on board, and proceeds to try and teach 'em a little gunnery practise. But it soon eventuates that all our efforts are like throwing pearls before swine, or whatever it is the poet says, and we perceives that me and Whispering Bill will have to do most of the dirty work of this grim visaged war ourselves. But anyhow, we keeps on drilling 'em for three days, consuming various rations of stimulants and waiting.

"On the morning of the fourth day the lookout on top of the lighthouse reports smoke to north'ards.

"It's not a regular steamer day, so we knows it must be the old *Tatumbla* rambling down to destroy us.

" 'Full head of steam!' orders Pacifico O'Hara. And old John Evans, who has volunteered for the *fiesta*, commences kicking our stokers into activity.

"*Me and Whispering* climbs the Bluff and goes up in the lighthouse for a look-see. And sure enough, sir, here comes the *Tatumbla*, mighty black and wicked, with sure enough cannons sticking out of her portholes.

"We hurries right back on board, tells the wild Irish-Chilean the glad news, and takes station on the focsle, where we loads the pom-poms.

"The old *Ometepic* lays there at the Aduana dock, hidden from the sea by the Bluff. She's just trembling all over from the steam in her boilers, and we've got the safety valve lashed down.

"Pretty soon the lookout signals that the *Tatumbla* is right outside the entrance, so O'Hara orders to cast off, and rings for full speed ahead. And out we goes, sir, hell bent for election.

"As soon as we clears the Bluff, we can see the enemy about three miles out, and she sure does look nasty. She's coming in at a good clip, as if she means business.

" 'The festivities are about to begin, Whispering,' says I, 'and believe me, they give promise to be plentifully spattered with casualties. Just tell the news to mother,' I says, 'or words to that effect.'

"About then there's a puff of smoke from the *Tatumbla* as she gives us an opening gun. It's short. She follows with a salvo, also short. But we're getting closer, fast. The old sister, *Ometepic*, is doing eighteen and getting better every minute.

"Another salvo—over! Now they've got us bracketed. All this time we don't do a thing but run straight at 'em. Because why? Well, because our poms are still out of range. All we can do is hold our patience and breath, with the valve tied down and every boiler plate buckling.

"A third broadside! It would have ruined us if we'd been where it hit, only we weren't. Trying to pot us was like target practise on a flying fish. We keeps right on going, and getting faster all the while.

" 'About time we got ready for business,' thinks I, so I signals Whispering Bill to lay his gun, and we stands by to begin scattering lead as soon as we're close enough. But all at once I can see lots of spigs aboard the *Tatumbla* running round like ants and waving their arms.

" 'What the hell, now?' I wonders, and can't make it out, nohow. Then suddenly that Irish-Chilean joker on the bridge pulls the whistle cord and we zoom direct at the enemy, with our siren bellowing like all the bulls of Bashan. And then a few.

"This here is too much for Honduran nerve. As we zip right at the gunboat, smoke and steam flying and a big bow wave in our teeth, down flops the *Tatumbla's* flag. And I'll bet, sir, a hundred and fifty sheets, tablecloths, towels, shirts and B. V. D's—or whatever—is waved at us. The greatest naval battle ever fought in those waters is all over before it has even hardly begun.

"We has just time to change our course, to keep from ramming the defeated enemy. It takes us twenty minutes to persuade old John to slow down his engines. We rounds up alongside the Hondurans, and Pacifico O'Hara sends me aboard with a prize crew.

"Brother, it sure is diverting. We finds the German commander locked in his stateroom, a prisoner to his own mutinied crew. Mad? Is he mad? Yes, sir, fighting, squalling mad is what he is. As for the second in command, a fat little greaser from Puerto Cortez, *he* is plumb insulted.

" 'You are no *caballeros!*' he states, after we've taken his sword. 'You no fight like gentlemen! Ze gentlemen, zey stand off and shoot it out. But you, wiz your ramming tactics—it ees just like ze dirty Americano trick of to hit a man wiz your fist. It ees like ze vulgar fighting wiz ze hands! *Por Dios, no!* My honor, she is lost!'

"So we gives him back his sword, and his honor is saved; and we invites him to join us in a drink with everybody aboard —except the German commander, who's still foaming. And white bosomed Peace descends in our midst again. All is happy. The only naval war I ever officiated at comes to an abrupt end, and an enjoyable time is had by all.

"Let's have another Daiquirí, sir, or maybe two, and drink its memory!"

By RIGHT *of* SUSPICION

The story of a detective who didn't always get his man

By WILLIAM H. STUEBER

I WONDER if a bricklayer ever gets so tired of seeing and handling bricks that he wishes they were all in hell? I know there's times when I get to feeling just that way about the essentials of my trade, and I get the feeling so bad that I forget that if I was minus the said essentials, I'd be minus a trade—and most likely minus the wherewithal to fill that aching void generally referred to as a stomach.

Other times I feel that my trade has all others backed thirty feet in the shade. Most likely this latter sort of feeling creeps over me after I've chased some gent a few thousand miles and finally got close enough to him to lay my hand on his shoulder and tell him the jig's up.

Then when I've got the gent safely cooped up, I go to the office of my chief, Big Bill Timmons—who, in case you're not familiar with the name, is boss of the manhunting department of the Bankers' and Brokers' Protective Association—and he generally mumbles something like:

"Good work, Devlin! Now here's the record and prison photo of another bird that's flew the coop and forgot to shake a certain amount from his fingers before flying. Bring him in!"

I might as well confess I rupture the threads on the old vest buttons when I hear that. Not that the words mean so much, but the way he says them. Understand? As much as if he were telling me that he could depend on me to succeed no matter how skilled a flyer the bird happened to be. Such times I'm head over heels in love with my trade; I'd rather be skinned alive than give it up.

Well, I walked into Big Bill's office one day late in August when it was hot as hell, and before I could get the words that were on the tip of my tongue rolling, he threw me a record and rogues' gallery picture and said—

"Get him!"

"But gosh darn it, Chief, I've just come back from a four weeks' chase that had me rambling over eight states, and it's time for my vacation."

He never raised his eyes from the papers he was reading.

"Well, combine business with pleasure, Devlin. Or take your three weeks' vacation first and go hunting after. I don't care which; just bring him in. So long!"

Those last two words were the chief's usual ones; they meant he didn't have the time or wasn't in the mood to listen to any more guff, alibis or pleas. They meant "git"; and "git" quickly.

There you go! Just one of the times I get disgusted with my trade. Crooks! Goshdarn them! You couldn't even go on a vacation without keeping one eye on a fishhook and the other peeled for a crook. I wished I'd been born a bologna maker. Now there's a trade. You make a certain number of pieces of hash in tights and you call it a day. You go home without a thing on your mind. You don't have to keep awake half the night wondering what clue you'll follow tomorrow; you forget your trade entirely until you're back in the bolognery the next morning.

I left Big Bill's office, walked to the subway and hopped a Bronx express. I was madder than a whole lot, and I guess by the time I flung myself into the old Morris chair in my room, I had goshdarned a few. I enjoyed the blue flunk of a nice calm vacation gone bluey for awhile, and then I did just what I should have done in the first place—got down to business and read the record the chief gave me.

If I had a wife or some one to share the room with me, and they heard me whistle like I did when I read that record, they'd have thought I'd joined the ranks of candidates for the cuckoo house; that is, unless they knew the bird who needed catching again was James Allen Corby, an old playmate of mine in this grand and glorious game of "try and find me"! Half the credit for the long winded whistle goes to the fact that Corby had had the audacity to turn a second trick in the same place he had pulled his first; said first having resulted in a five-year sentence which had only expired July 15th! Here it was only August 24th and he was wanted again.

An hour I sat thinking about Corby and our last "game," which had progressed after this fashion:

From their office in a none too modern building near Trinity Place, Devore & Ehret, a brokerage firm of no two-by-four proportions and a member of the Bankers' and Brokers' Protective Association, called the chief one morning to inform him that one of the gents who handled considerable cash in the course of a day was missing.

If that were all, a "help wanted" ad for a dollar and a quarter would have fixed things up; but it certainly would have taken many an ad to fix up the eleven thousand in cash also missing.

The big and little of it—just to get away from the old long and short—was that the Association was out eleven thousand berries and I was out after a Mr. James Allen Corby and whatever part of the loot he hadn't spent.

After I'd been so close to my quarry a dozen times that I could almost hear the greenbacks crinkling, and still not able to lay hands or eyes upon him, I wished I'd been born a sawbones or something. The longer I searched, the more disgusted I became with my trade.

We private gumshoers are always in close touch with the regular John Laws, and I'm not telling a whopper when I say I got more telegrams than a successful channel swimmer. No, not the congratulatory sort; all from our main office and along these lines:

POLICE OF HAMPTON REPORT FUGITIVE NO. 2973 SEEN IN THEIR VICINITY —TIMMONS

Bother enough reading all these wires; battles enough with jay town operators as to whether or not the charges on the wire had been paid on the sending end; chasing enough to interview the informants who ran the full range from police chiefs down to seedy constables who wouldn't know James Allen Corby if he put the bee on them for a dime. But worse, oh, far worse, I pretty near ran the life out of a brand new Ford chasing over the Eastern States.

None of my ancestors were Royal Canadian Mounted Policemen. Sometimes I don't get my man. In Buffalo I washed my hands of Corby. I swore to a self-administered vow that I wouldn't go from here to Hohokus if the chief of that metropolis sent me a sworn affidavit that Corby was in his coop shackled hand and foot, strait-jacketed and lashed to the bars with one inch rope. No, not even if he sent fingerprints, photo and a lock of Corby's hair to prove he wasn't just supposing.

I wired Big Bill Timmons I was through; that I'd take my own damned good time motoring home to explain why six months of my time and pay collecting had gone for nothing. I waited a full day for my chief's reply, and do you know that I cooled down a lot and wished I hadn't been so hasty about quitting a good job?

Just when I decided I'd better be buying a pick and shovel—the only other tools of trade I'm familiar with—if I expected to eat two eggs for breakfast next week, the return wire came. I even forgot to tip the bellhop who brought it to my room, I was that anxious to see what the chief had to say. I tore the envelope open, read, and I guess my sigh of relief must have sounded like a slow leak in a tire pumped to sixty pounds. To make sure, I read the wire again:

TAKE THREE WEEKS' VACATION STOP FORGET CORBY STOP HE'S JAILED STOP
—TIMMONS

I went right on the vacation, you bet. And my idea of a vacation differs a heap from the normal man's. I call it a ripping good time to cuddle comfortably behind the wheel of my Ford and drive until I'm tired. If I happen to tire where there's a hotel or rooming house, I'll sleep there for the night. If I happen to be in a clump of woods, I'll pull to one side of the road, curl up on the rear seat, and do my forty winks right there. I eat when and where the notion strikes me. I drive no place in particular, but I like to keep away from the main roads. Maybe my family tree could be traced back to Columbus; I sure love to explore. And I feel as close to heaven, as I think I'll ever get, when I'm bouncing over some dirt road, just drinking in the sights and wondering where I'm going. That's how I spent the three weeks the chief granted me.

The only way my vacation tallies with the usual mortal's is the speed with which it passes. The calendar said three weeks, but it flashed by like so many days, and once again I was in Big Bill's office.

"Corby's a corker for covering mileage, Chief," I said to steer him away from anything he planned to say about my quitting wire.

"Humph! Maybe so, and maybe not. I'm running over to the Tombs to see if he'll do more talking than he's done since his arrest. Come along?"

I never refuse an invitation to get a glimpse of a bird who thinks he has a perfect right to help himself to another's seed, so I went along. Corby was awaiting trial, and the waiting wasn't doing him any good. He was either making knots with his fingers or tapping the floor with his feet. He just couldn't keep still. He looked through the bars at the chief and me, for just a second; turned his head away quickly and the side view I had I thought looked like a kid would look who's been caught pilfering jam.

"Well, Corby," the chief said, "your act goes on tomorrow. This is your last chance to make things easier for yourself. If there's any of the money left, and you'll tell us where it is, we'll not push for the maximum sentence."

Corby might as well have been born

tongueless. Eyeless, too; he didn't favor us with even a glance of contempt. The chief asked him other questions and received the same answer—if any. The chief walked away deep in the rut of disgust, and of course I followed.

"Strange bird, Chief," I said.

"Strange? Once in awhile you do meet a strange bird. Corby's the kind you'll probably never meet again as long as you live. Ask him where he hid all the months we hunted him; what he did with the money; why he took it in the first place; who, how or where he spent it. You'll get the same answer—silence. All we know is that he was caught in Poughkeepsie."

I WAS in court next morning. The court had furnished Corby with a lawyer to look after his defense. Said lawyer knew as much about his client as the opposition did. He explained this to the court. Things went on.

". . . And how do you plead? Guilty or not guilty?" the court clerk asked.

"Guilty," Corby answered. The first word out of his thin lips since arrest.

Judge Mattern cleared his throat. His eyes were in keeping with his reputation among the light fingered gentry—hard! You just couldn't bluff the judge. His justice was the kind that looked on nobodys and well-knowns with the same harshness. He believed in pity; yes, pity for the wronged, not the offender. He looked Corby over thoroughly. If he thought the twenty-seven year old defendant was going to quail before the gaze he was disappointed. He tried his hand at words.

"You," he began sternly, "come into this court with representation you choose to ignore. You refuse to speak, believing, and wrongly, that your silence will lessen the severity of the law. You offer no reason for your act. You refuse to cooperate in securing the return of the stolen money. You are the first prisoner to come before me with the audacity to think himself above the law of the land. I sentence you to five years at hard labor in the State penitentiary, regretting I can not double it because this is your first offense."

"Thank you, your Honor," Corby answered.

Yes, I've heard many a bird say that; but none in Corby's tone. Believe it or not, the fellow straightened as if the weight of the whole world had been taken from his shoulders. They took him away even as he smiled. No, not that usual smile of the convict who wants to show the world how a "game guy takes it", and whose knees at the same time knock with fear and the terror of the years to come. Corby's smile was different; it came from the heart, seemed to light the room—or I'm a fourth rate reader of men's faces after twelve years of doing just that.

He had my interest aroused, this bird, and I went around to the pen where they cooped him up while waiting for the wagon to haul him to the station where he'd take the train to the Big House. I stopped twenty feet away from the bars, thinking my ears were playing me false. Corby was singing—

"There's a long, long trail a-winding, down in the land of my dreams . . ."

It was too much for me. I beat it.

And that was the last I heard or saw of Corby until the day, three years later, that the chief kinked my vacation plans with his orders to bring Corby in again. I suppose he had two years scratched off the original five for good behavior.

Knowing he wouldn't be an easy bird to catch, and remembering the chief's saying I could take my yearly three weeks before starting to hunt Corby if I wanted to, I decided to do just that. I'd go hoboing in my Ford first, and when the three weeks were gone, I'd get down to hunting. I spent the whole of the next day packing duds, planning a trip to a locality where there were plenty of dirt roads to lure me on, and fixing the Ford.

Eight o'clock Tuesday morning I was off. I should have felt like a kid on the last day of school. I wanted to, but I couldn't. Once out of the big town's limits, I cuddled down behind the wheel; but

a ghost of Corby ran before the radiator thumbing his nose at me and daring me to come get him.

I tried to run him—the ghost I mean—down, but the fixing I had done on Lizzie was as good as a cobbling job by a baker. She wouldn't or couldn't go fast enough. I tried to frighten him away with a song; but Corby's song of three years ago came back at me:

> "There's a long, long trail a-winding, down in the land of my dreams . . ."

Goshdarn it, he was fixing to spoil my whole vacation! I wished I'd been born a tinsmith. Nothing to worry about but tin that stayed where you put it and couldn't worry you more than a gashed finger's worth.

I took my wrath out on the car. Afternoon found me north of Poughkeepsie, far from the main road, hell knows just where, and Lizzie wheezing, spitting and coughing. Steam was coming out the radiator cap in imitation of the Black Diamond Express—and a good imitation, too! Dollars to apple pie, I wouldn't get much farther without giving the car a bucket of *aqua pura*.

The first house that came in sight was a rundown shack on the right of the dirt road, and set back from it some two hundred yards. I didn't fancy walking that far, nor driving in. The dilapidated condition of the place seemed to tell me it was deserted, anyhow; and while I was deciding whether or not the car could go a bit farther, said car ceased her revolutions.

It was walk or sit, now. I walked. The windows of the house were conspicuously clean, I discovered on approaching, and the fact cheered me. Somebody must live here, certainly. I walked to the back of the house—a habit formed in younger days when I peddled books and collected variously toned no's. And then I pulled up sharp.

I saw a young woman splitting wood, and while I'm not exactly a candidate for the old men's home, I knew she was handling the ax better than I could. I waited for the end of a stroke, then said:

"Pardon me. Could I have a pail of water?"

I expected her to be startled. But, cool as October, she paused, and turned toward me while babying the ax. The best years of my life I've been studying faces—men's, and not good ones, of course—and offhand I could tell you something about the faces of an odd hundred inmates of our best jails that identify them to me immediately, though to the layman their faces would just be faces. But the face I was looking into then stumps me when it comes to describing it.

Like an angel's? A queen's? A Carmen? I don't know. Anyhow it was beautiful. Her arms, browned by the sun in long hours outdoors, and muscular beyond the usual woman's by the nature of the work I spied her at, and probably other tasks equally unladylike, were for all that on a par with her face. The short sleeved calico dress was well worn, yet beyond the slight soiling of the immediate task, freshly laundered. Her shoes, rugged and nicked by the vicinity's stones, were the only things in keeping with the desolate surroundings.

She looked me over a second, smiled and said:

"Why of course you may. I'll fetch it."

A meadow lark ceased his song. I don't know if the bird was shamed by the woman's voice, or if it just wanted to listen and then try to imitate it.

"No. I'll get it," I volunteered. "You just tell me where."

She sunk the ax into the edge of the chopping block with a grace that was nothing short of a symphony in motion, laughed and said:

"But you'd never find it! Carry it, if you insist, but I'll have to go along and show you."

She snatched a pail from the kitchen steps; handed it to me and led the way through a patch of waist-high bush to a spot a hundred yards distant; stooped and flung back the cover of a boarded spring.

As usual, when I'm trying to be the personification of grace, my foot skidded

from a moss encrusted rock. Only her arm prevented me from pitching into the spring.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, as frightened as though I'd broken my neck—and I wished I had.

"Nothing," I assured her. "Just a slip of the foot instead of the cup."

We started back.

"You're from the city, aren't you?" she asked from behind me. "You're accustomed to getting water without such a struggle?"

Was she being sarcastic, envious, pitying? Take your choice. I wasn't thinking which, as she followed me to the car and watched my later efforts to inveigle Lizzie into a going mood. I perspired and puffed freely and at last sat on the bumper to rally for a second attack which I hoped would be more successful than the first.

"Awkward, isn't it?" she said condolingly, teeth glistening in the sun like new fallen snow. "They always stop when the sun's hot, don't they?"

"I always thought them affected by everything but the weather."

"It is lovely weather, though, isn't it? I just love this time of the year! Look back there beyond the spring. Did you ever see such an array of colors?"

I looked. Frankly, I didn't see much to write home about—green, red, yellow, brown trees. Fair enough, but I couldn't wax eloquent, and I guess she read my disinterest, for she added rather apologetically:

"You really have to live here to appreciate it. In fact, you must live here alone."

"You don't, do you?" I asked, then spun the crank handle again.

"Oh, yes! Winter and summer. I bet you'd be devoured by a winter here all alone. But then so would I if—if I wasn't waiting for—Jim."

Something like a mist came over her eyes and made them even more beautiful. She tossed her head to chase the threatening blues. I wanted to say something to help along those lines, but all I could do was mumble—

"Yes?"

"I've been waiting three years for Jim. Maybe I shouldn't tell—well what of it? Even if you were an arm of the law, you couldn't harm Jim now, for he's paid for his— Well, the three years I've been waiting, Jim's been in jail! He's free now, thank God, and working in New York."

I won't lie and say I was all a-flutter with interest in her story; but the childish way she opened her heart to me, a perfect stranger, and the emotions that chased each other across her face engrossed me. So much so that I didn't hear a sister car to my own draw up beside me and stop.

The mailman. He passed a letter to her and drove on. How her eyes gleamed. How her fingers twitched. Like a child with a Christmas package, she tore the letter open. The envelop fell to the ground. She unfolded the letter, held the three ten-dollar bills that had been enclosed in one hand and fell to reading with the same sort of zest I generally use in tackling a sirloin steak.

I LOOKED at the envelop on the ground. If she was all excited over what she read, I don't know what to say I was over the envelop. On the prison record I had in my coat pocket was a specimen signature of James Allen Corby, and the same defiant curves and flourishes were on that envelop. They had been written by the same man, in spite of the fact that in the upper left hand corner the sender's name was P. Chester Morgan. You can bet your pudding I wasn't going to forget the address beneath the name, either.

"From Jim," she was saying, moist eyed. "I suppose you think me silly? Or maybe—if you've ever waited and hungered for something or some one with all your heart, you'll understand? Three long years I've waited for him, and now there's only one year more—"

"I thought awhile ago you said he was free?" I interrupted.

"Yes, but he's able to earn more money in New York than here. He's going to stay in New York until we've saved a

thousand dollars to buy stock for this place. Oh, won't I be happy when I get a letter saying he's coming home."

Then I thought of the newly enacted Baumes Laws! Her Jim would get a stiff bit for his second job—and no time off for good behavior. I suppose I'm only half a wheel, for all at once I found myself wishing I'd been born a truck driver. Now there's a trade that calls for occasionally sneaking up on a mere pedestrian and then blowing a horn that nearly scares said pedestrian out of his wits; but it doesn't call for tearing a woman's heart out by the roots and justifying yourself by calling it duty. I could have arrested Corby, alias Morgan, without a thought to what I was doing to this woman, if I'd been born with a heart as big as a celery seed; if I had been like some of the other boys in my trade.

James Allen Corby. I don't know if I ever hated a man so much in such a little while; not because he was a criminal, but because he was making such a maelstrom of her life. That's as close as I want to go on record as saying she'd found the spot in my heart that other women had been shooting at for years with never a hit.

Big hearted Corby. Sending her thirty dollars every two weeks out of a loot of five thousand! I would have laid odds right then that he was spending over five hundred a week on himself, jazz, gin and jennies!

I stood there staring at the little lady and wondering what to do—as if there were anything else but to go get him. I could quit my job and forget the envelop and the address, forget how to come back to this dirt road, and by so doing save her—I wasn't thinking of him, see—for awhile. But there are other gumshoes in the trade. If I didn't get him, some one else would, because a thousand dollar reward means a heap to some dicks, and even if there wasn't a reward, the law wins sooner or later.

"Well, I'll have to be getting on," I said when I'd decided I'd just have to nail Corby. And before I took him to the lockup, I'd mash him to a pulp for double-crossing her. "I'll have—"

"I'll have coffee ready in a minute. Would you like a cup?"

I guess she so seldom got a chance to talk to any one that she hated to see me go, but I only had half a heart left and I didn't want to lose that, so I said:

"Thanks a lot. But I must get this rattlebox rattling."

I grabbed the crank handle, gave it a twist, wishing it was Corby's neck. Miracle! The motor roared. I climbed in. She came to the side and said:

"I—I—maybe I talked too much? You won't tell any one, will you?"

It hurt me worse than the time I had an infected wisdom tooth pulled, but I managed to mumble—

"I won't tell a soul."

"Thank you," she said, sweetly.

"Your loyalty to this Jim person arouses my interest. May I ask just why he went on a vacation at the State's expense? Surely not larceny?"

"Exactly!"

"Then how come you live in such poverty and your Jim is out working for a living? What happened to the loot?"

"For four months I begged Jim to return the portion his riotous living hadn't cost; pleaded with him to go back to New York and face the music. But friends of his—God, what a name for the professional handshakers who clung to him like leeches—told him that would be silly. When the money was all gone and his friends deserted him, he wished he'd taken my advice. I bought this place out of my own savings. We were married and expected to spend the rest of our days here together. What little money I had left wasn't sufficient for stock and tools necessary if we were to make an honest living, and the day Jim was going to work to earn the sum we needed, the law caught up with him. Well, he's paid the law's price and as I told you before he's free now and working for our equipment capital."

Gosh what a time I had to keep from telling her the nature of his work. Finally

I bid her goodby and the usual run of luck.

I was off. Stopped at the first garage and had a mechanic look Lizzie over. A new timing apparatus, a few turns on the carbureter, and she hummed like the day she came from Detroit. I burned the roads to New York, arriving at 6 P.M. in front of the address written in the upper corner of that envelop.

"I want to see Mr. Morgan," I said to the hag who opened the door in response to the bell.

"Gone to work," she answered.

"And where does he work?"

"Subway. The new one downtown."

I called at every field office from 14th Street south. At Chambers Street, I heard the words I wanted:

"Yes. There's a P. C. Morgan on the payroll. A pick and shovel man. You'll find him down the hole at Church and Dey Streets."

I drove down there, forgot I had on my Sunday clothes and scampered down the muddy ladder. Saw a gent doing nothing and knew he was the foreman. Asked him for Morgan and he pointed my bird out.

"Tell him to step over here for a chat," I said, showing my badge.

Morgan came. I walked from beneath the glare of the three-hundred watt lamps into the shadows. My fists were aching to pound the doublecrosser.

"What is it?" he inquired of me.

"Hello, Corby. Nice evening, hey? Dropped in to chin with you a bit about the night of July 31st, and a visit you made to Devore & Ehret's office."

"It's been a little more than three years since I was in their office—"

"Don't lie, you skunk! If you do, you'll enjoy a stay in the handiest hospital before you go to jail."

He bristled and walked so close to me that I could feel his breath on my chin. His face worked nervously while he talked into my teeth: "I don't know what you're talking about. If you're hinting at something crooked, you're a rotten liar!"

"Cut that," I yelled, grabbing him by the blue jumper collar. "A liar isn't half bad compared with you, anyhow. That woman of yours—she's up there in the hills believing in you, eating her heart out, slaving to make the dream she's living come true. And you're down here framing an alibi, running crooked as a mountain pass, and sending her a measly thirty dollars every two weeks out of your loot. Why you—"

He raised his fist and let me have it plump on the jaw. You bet I returned the whack, and because I weigh two hundred when I'm feeling right and he was only one hundred and thirty including the twenty pounds of mud on his boots, he went sprawling. He didn't move. The foreman came running.

"What's it all about?" he asked.

"Nothing," I said and picked up the groggy Corby.

Bit by bit his wits came back. There were tears in his eyes and I felt sorry I'd banged him.

"Listen," he said. "Once in my life I slipped off the straight and narrow. I've paid for that! I'm telling you I never went near Devore & Ehret's since. You said something about my woman—she's not! She's my wife. Good God, why can't you leave me alone? I'm down in this hell eight hours a night for a lousy twenty-eight a week. I work four hours more every night to make it a little more, so I can send her the thirty. There's the foreman. Ask him if I've ever been off a single night—July 31st or any other night. I tell you again I'm on the level."

Yes, I've heard them groan before; saw their eyes fill with crocodile tears—but this was Corby. You could not have thought him lying any more than I did. In fact, I wanted to believe him. I turned to the foreman with a dry—

"What kind of a bird is he?"

"First rate! Does more than his bit all the time. Works seven nights a week—hard. Doesn't guzzle booze; doesn't smoke. I'll vouch for his not being off a single night since the day he started, and the payroll record will back me up."

I was tickled. I wiped the blood from his cheek and told him to go back to work.

"If you're not here tomorrow and the day after that, I'll know you were lying, and I'll chase you to the ends of the earth. If you weren't mixed up in this job at Devore's, I'll see you through!" I just curbed my tongue in time. I came near ending with, "For her sake!"

He shook my hand and meant what he said—

"I'll be here until you tell me I can go."

Corby was gone. The foreman walked away and I called His Highness back.

"Listen. The kid's being searched for by the regular cops. If you want to you can turn him in. If you'd like to give the underdog a fighting chance, you can forget all you've seen and heard. Get me?"

"I'm the original deaf and dumb mute, mister," the foreman said.

BRIGHT and early next morning I was in Big Bill Timmons' office.

"Chief," I said, "it seems to me that this charge against Corby smells strongly of fish. Who investigated the original report of the theft?"

"I was shorthanded, so I sent Higgins."

Higgins! Now I'm not the sort of a gumshoe that's out to cop the crown of fame from Sherlock Holmes, or the kind that thinks the Scotland Yard man wasn't much hotter than the North Pole in March; and again, I don't think no one but an old fogy makes a good dick. Higgins was a youngster just breaking into the game; that's nothing against his cleverness or the nimbleness of his brain, but you've got to admit experience teaches. He lacked the experience, that's all. Hence I left the chief rather abruptly and went over to Devore & Ehret's to see what I could see that Higgins didn't.

Devore himself was at my side when I interviewed the cashier, whose story followed these lines:

"It was the last day of July, and the books had to be closed and balanced before I went home. Some months this job takes me well into the next morning. That morning at two o'clock, somebody knocked on the office door. I pulled the shade aside, saw no one. Thinking I was mistaken, I went back to work. Another knock, another look and no one in sight. The third time I heard the knock I opened the door and stuck my head out in the hall. A masked man pushed a gun in my face and backed me into a chair. He tied me up, gagged me, then helped himself at the open safe. He came back to inspect the ropes holding me, retied those ropes about my feet, and his face brushed my shoulder as he rose. The mask slipped down and I caught a glimpse of his face. Finally he left.

"I worked the gag out of my mouth and called for help. Nick, the night fireman of the building, heard me and soon released me. We phoned the police. They took me to headquarters and after looking over the pictures in the rogues' gallery, I picked out the man. Only then did I know he had worked for the firm before and proved dishonest. The man was Corby!"

The story ended. Devore turned to me with a positive:

"Quite plain, isn't it? Corby was aware of the habit of night work on the last day of the month. Served a double purpose in coming here. Had his revenge and easy money at the same time."

It looked bad for Corby, but you've got to sample both glasses of beer if you want to make certain which of the two is the better. And I wanted to hear from the Nick person, too. I asked Devore where I could find him and he told me down in the basement any time between the hours of 8 P.M. and 6 A.M.

I bummed the balance of the day away, and at 8.30 P.M. I was back at the building. The doors were all locked and I did some lusty pounding before Nick came from the basement and admitted me after he'd given a heap of attention to my badge. I went back to the basement with him. A water pump—the noisiest I've ever run up against—was going full blast when I asked Nick to tell me about the night of the robbery. He was very obliging; yea, eager.

"A few minutes after 2 A.M. I was stok-

ing the fires when I heard some one screaming for help. I went to the elevator and rode up, listening. I heard the scream again on the fourth floor and found Devore's cashier tied up. That's all."

"Fine! You don't mind if I roam around a bit, do you? It's raining cats and dogs outside, and I don't feel like getting soaked."

He said I could stay as long as I liked, and went back to work. For no good reason at all, I strolled through the cellar. It was like any other cellar; whitewashed walls, dust, dirt and little heaps of junk the only decorations. The noise of that water pump got my goat. I went to the front of the cellar. Along one side of the wall was a row of large nails and hanging thereon were several pairs of overalls. Nick's coat, or at least one I guessed was Nick's, was hanging on one of the nails, and behind it as a sort of protection to keep it free of whitewash, several newspapers were suspended. I don't know what drew my eye to the bottom of the papers, but I saw marks after the fashion that would be left if you had a newspaper on the table unopened and cut an interesting piece out with a sharp knife. After you took your piece out, the marks of your knife would be visible on following pages.

I moved the top of Nick's coat and discovered the paper was the New York *World* of July 15th.

I thanked Nick for his hospitality and climbed the stairs to the main floor. The door opened from the inside. I didn't need Nick's assistance getting out. I started uptown feeling mighty confident that Corby was going home to the faithful one who was waiting—and lots quicker than he or she expected. It was a grand and glorious feeling, I'll say, and it grew grander and still more glorious when I went to the back number department of the *World*, bought a copy of the issue of July 15th, and after reading every blessed page I ran across a tiny item to the effect that one James Allen Corby had the previous day been released from prison on parole. Some one in the Devore & Ehret building had been mighty interested in that item and clipped it out.

I WAS in Devore's private office next morning and asked if it were he. He answered negatively and I said:

"Well, Thursday is the last day of the month. Your cashier will be working late again and there's a few things I don't quite get. Could you arrange to meet me here a little before 2 A.M. Friday morning? I plan to reenact the crime and see what develops."

"Surely. Capital idea! But who'll we have to act Corby's part?"

"Corby!"

Devore's secretary's entry saved me a lot of explaining. Before I made a hasty exit, I extracted his promise that he'd keep mum about our plan.

Back to my chief I went.

"Want to come see an exhibition of fireworks Friday morning early?" I asked and grinned, figuring a witness more or less would strengthen my case—if all worked the way I expected.

"You bet. Forgotten your vacation, hey?"

"Vacations can wait. I'm helping some one who's been waiting for three years, and if I don't act quick, she'll wait maybe ten more. Say, bring Higgins along; he'll learn a lot!"

We arranged a meeting place and I left. Chased up to Corby's rooming house and drew a sigh of relief and reassurance of his innocence when I found he hadn't moved. If I had the slightest doubt about his being framed, it vanished when he agreed to play his rôle and trust to me to see that he got an even break—if any.

Friday, September 1st, 1:45 A.M., Corby, Devore, Big Bill Timmons, Higgins and myself met. Devore let us into the building with his pass key. I gave Corby his final instructions briefly.

"You're on your way to Devore's offices on the fourth floor. Get started!"

Corby did the natural thing; rang for the elevator.

"Hell! You're a sweet holdup man!

There's no service this time of morning; you'll have to hoof it. "

He led the way up the stairs. On the third floor we ran into something along the line of help in saving Corby, that I didn't expect—three women were busy mopping the hall. In reply to my questions they said they were on that floor every morning except Sunday, cleaning and mopping. Always they were there at the same time; within fifteen minutes either way at most. No, they hadn't heard any screams on July 31st. Yes, they remembered the date on account of the newspaper accounts of the robbery the next day. No, they were positive Nick had not come up the stairs. The only unusual thing they had noticed during the night was that the elevator had made one trip.

"Why, that's not unusual, is it?" I led their spokesman on, pressing an unexpected advantage.

"Oh, yes, it is. You see, we were allowed to use the elevator once, but when we did a little damage by running one too high—not knowing the automatic stop was out of order—the chief engineer said that in future we'd have to walk up and down. After that he always threw the main switch and the elevators could not be moved."

There were two points for Corby! Certainly he wouldn't be fool enough to go to the cellar to throw the switch, even if he knew its location, and chance running into Nick, who knew him on sight. And just as certainly he couldn't have walked up the stairs and passed the charwomen without their knowing it.

The gang of us proceeded to the fourth floor. We tried the door to the cashier's office. It was locked, but he opened it at once in response to our knocking, and was quite upset to see us. We pushed in. I called everybody's attention to the spring on the door.

"Now get this, mister," I said to the cashier. "We're going to reenact this whole robbery business. We're going down to the cellar now. You're supposed to be tied and gagged. When the clock on that wall gets to the exact time you succeeded in spitting out the gag, you howl for help—as loud, or louder than you did on the night of July thirty-first. Come on, boys; we'll go visit Nick."

On the floor below, the charwomen were still busy.

"If you hear any screaming upstairs, come down to the basement and let us know, will you?" I asked.

Then down to Nick. I wish you could have seen the different colors fly across his face.

"Nick," I said, "did you have that water pump going the night of the robbery?"

"Sure."

"Well, get it going now and listen with both ears, because in a few minutes the cashier's going to be calling for help again."

The pump started. Devore's face reddened at the din and he seemed to realize how impossible it would be to hear even a gunshot four flights up. Honest, Nick's ears stood straight out straining for the voice. Before he'd made up his mind whether he heard it or not, the charwomen came trooping down with the news that there was much screaming in progress on the fourth floor. And none of us had heard a whisper. Score three for Corby.

"Now, Nick," I warned, "don't you get all excited. Let's see just what you did next when you heard the screams that night. Careful now! No mistakes! Do exactly as you did that night."

Nick walked to the elevator and threw the control to "up." The car did not move.

"Nick—" I laughed— "isn't it a fact that you forgot to throw the main switch? And isn't it another fact that on the night of the robbery you *expected* to use the car? That you threw the switch long before you heard this yelling that I'm beginning to think the cashier never did?"

He looked at me kind of sheepishly. Didn't answer.

"Well," I said, "go throw the switch and take us up."

We were at the cashier's door again.

"Now, Nick," I coached, "you say you went in and released the cashier. Show us just how you did it, like a good fellow, will you?"

Nick was having a tough time of it. He tried the door. Of course it was locked.

"But the cashier's tied up inside. He can't let you in. Oh! You had a key, didn't you?"

Nick shook his head negatively; and I think sorrowfully. I called to the cashier to forget his imaginary bonds and let us in. Score four for Corby.

"Now then, what happened next? Which one of you phoned the police?"

First, both claimed the honor; eventually the cashier won out.

"O.K." I laughed. "Now I want you to do exactly as you did that night. If you make any slips, you're likely to wake up in jail tomorrow morning, so be mighty careful!"

The cashier perspired as though he were in a Turkish bath. He went to his phone, lifted the receiver reluctantly, and it's a cinch he wasn't wishing me the best of health and a long life. He waited a few seconds, then dangled the hook impatiently.

I couldn't control myself longer.

"You might as well hang up." I laughed. "You can't get a connection without going to the switchboard—"

"Hell! You've got me so worked up I forgot I did that the night I made the call," he alibied.

"Well, go in and make your connection now!"

He went into the adjoining room with all of us pressing in after him. After he'd fumbled with the plugs awhile, Devore rasped:

"Why, Charlie, you don't know the first thing about a plug switchboard. I can see that. You didn't make the connection that night."

Score five for Corby.

I turned to Devore and said:

"Well, I guess that ends the burlesque on the big robbery. Nick and this bird read about Corby's release and they planned this business—and not for his benefit, either. I guess we'll have to take them both in, hey, Chief?"

Nick almost bawled.

"No, no! It was all his doings," he cried, pointing his finger at the cashier. "I telephoned the police from an outside pay station when we couldn't make the connection on the board. He told me about big money we could make in the stock market if we had working capital. Two days cleaned us out. Neither of us got a cent."

Devore too almost bawled.

"Er—er—you can't take them. This cashier, as you call him—is my nephew and it would hurt business."

Timmons, who until then had been giving a perfect imitation of a sphinx, opened with a dry—

"Well, you've collected the loss from the association."

"I'll write you a check for the amount right this minute."

"But Devlin here is supposed to get a thousand dollars reward—"

"I'll give him that in cash! Anything to keep my nephew's name out of the hands of the police and the newspapers," Devore moaned.

When we left we were prisonerless. Timmons and Corby were elated, Higgins better educated, and I was richer. Timmons and Higgins left us. I turned to Corby and said;

"Now, kid, there's that woman waiting out in the hills for you to make the thousand dollars to be spent for stock and tools for the farm. Here! Take this thousand of Devore's, grab the first train you can get—and live happily ever after."

First he was dead against it. Finally he accepted the money as a loan and added:

"But I can't go home tonight. I've got to report to the parole board tomorrow morning."

See? If I'd been one day later with my reenacting of the crime, the cops would have nabbed the kid; or rather he'd have walked right into their arms, and hell knows whether things would have panned out the way they did.

About noon next day I met Corby at the station. I had a paper that proved Devore hadn't lost any time about putting the finishing touches to the case. He must have seen reporters after we left him the night before. The news item read something like this:

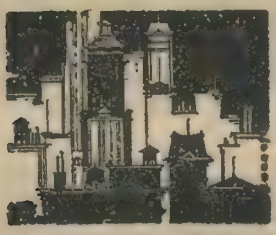
POLICE CALLED OFF BROKERAGE THEFT CASE

Loot recovered in cellar where it had evidently been hidden by frightened thief. Cashier admits error in identifying rogues' gallery picture. Police no longer seek James Allen Corby.

I showed the piece to Corby. He knew all about it; they had told him at headquarters. He shook hands with me and said goodby. And, if I'm a judge of men, I think he's going to be under the impression, as long as he lives, that I did a lot for him. I think he'll try to repay me by sticking to the straight and narrow. I hope so.

I turned down his offer to come visit with him a few days. Just because I saved him from jail is no reason why I should steal his wife, is it? And if I went to see her again, I think I wouldn't be able to stop myself from doing just that.

And now I'm in one of those spells where I feel that my trade's got all others licked. It must be awful to be born a baker and always be fussing with clammy dough that stays just where you put it, never talks back to you, can't make you happy or sad. Gosh, I'm glad I'm a gumshoe artist—even if I'm not a perfect one.



Concluding

The FOREHEAD *of* GOLIATH

A Novel of the Slave Coast

By ROBERT SIMPSON

NOT since the days when those turbulent traders, the Unusual MacBeths, had lorded it over the Oil Rivers had Kingdon, manager of Marsden & Company's beach at Warri, had such premonitions of disaster. His man, Balloch, down with fever; his new junior assistant mysteriously skulking in native huts after dark. And now Scurvy Murvey, the most hated skipper on the West Coast, had jammed Kingdon's launch into a mudbank with his grubby freighter. A quarrel with Murvey followed, and as Kingdon came down the rope ladder, out of the shadows a girl appeared, her pretty face contorted by fear.

"Take me away," she whispered. "Anywhere. Please, I must get away!"

In surprise Kingdon asked—

"Murvey?"

"No. He's nothing. Marsallow—he's the very devil himself!"

Compassionately, Kingdon helped the girl into his boat, and they were off, but

not before a knife thrown from the ship narrowly missed his throat. She told him she was Spanish, that her name was Annette, and that the dreaded Marsallow was her uncle and guardian. Midstream they met the war canoe of Lori Egba, a friendly native chief, and for safety's sake, Kingdon transferred the girl to it. Arriving at Kingdon's beach, they could see from the canoe a huge figure of a man standing on the office veranda. The girl wilted and cried—

"Marsallow!"

Hiding the girl in the great canoe, Kingdon went up to the house alone, asking the giant Spaniard his business.

"My niece," demanded Marsallow.

Kingdon informed him that she'd already gone upriver in a launch to Sapeli, whereupon the Spaniard threatened him with a pistol, accusing him of lying. Kingdon, who guessed that the big man's greatest weakness was greed for money, straightway ordered the man from his premises. With a show of affected courtesy Marsallow retired. Immediately the girl came forth from her hiding place, and Kingdon escorted her into his office. There they discovered young Randolph.

"Somewhere I have seen you, have I not?" the girl exclaimed. "Somewhere. A long time ago, no?"

"I'm afraid not." The blond young man smiled nervously.

Kingdon sent him off to bed, and decided that Annette must go aboard the *Ganna-Ganna*, an ex-mail boat, at once if she were to get out of Marsallow's reach. At the gig wharf the watchboy met them and, in great fear, told Kingdon that some one had stolen the company canoe and that all the Kroo boys had disappeared. At that moment, from behind a towering mango tree, Marsallow appeared. There was a smile on his face, and in his hand gleamed a pistol. Brutally he seized the girl by the arm.

"Now my niece will—" he began grimly.

And then the giant Spaniard staggered. A flash of blond lightning had leaped out of the darkness . . .

MARSALLOW did not scream. He made no sound at all. The arm across his throat was like a rope of wire and it held. So Marsallow, who was a man of many such adventures, did not waste his scanty breath on fruitless strugglings. He paused. Perhaps there were others. Perhaps the muzzle of a gun . . .

Marsallow heard a step on his right and his gun hand swung on a wide arc until it came in sudden contact with a heavy body that seemed literally to fall upon his right arm; strong hands with weight above them gripped his wrist and tried to bear the hand downward, so that his gun would point into the ground.

Marsallow almost smiled. There was to be no shooting. Everything was to be done very quietly because shooting on another man's property would be too conspicuous. Marsallow understood perfectly. He had frequently found silence convenient and necessary; situations in which a knife came most naturally to hand.

"Drop it Marsallow!"

The voice was Harth's, low, hoarse and rather breathless. His whole strength and weight bore down upon the huge Spaniard's gun hand, and Marsallow knew then that Harth was no weakling. He knew also that the arm across his throat was slowly shutting off his breath.

He lurched, swayed like a great tree in a gale and suddenly dropped to his knees.

Kingdon, coming rather dizzily to his feet, was quite sure the earth shook as Marsallow and his double burden came down. Randolph, shocked loose from his perch on Marsallow's shoulders, catapulted into space with even greater speed than he had arrived.

Harth hung on a longer moment, found his grip slipping, then felt Marsallow's gun arm come up like a suddenly released springboard. A second later Harth was flat on his back wondering if his chest had caved in, and Marsallow was leaping to his feet again, huge, devastating and terrible as ever, his gun swinging with unpleasant speed to cover everybody in sight.

"Annette!" Marsallow's tone was low, yet thunderously imperative.

There was no answer. The girl lay where she had fallen. Kingdon ran toward her.

But Marsallow, at a single stride, ranged himself between and stood over the girl with a decisive gesture of possession.

"My niece—she is go with me," he announced somewhat breathlessly. "Annette!"

He stooped to shake the girl to life and as if the threat of that touch of his fingers galvanized her into action, Annette wriggled sharply out of reach; wriggled and rolled and tried to leap to her feet.

Marsallow followed, pawing at the girl and cursing her in Spanish, trying at the same time to keep an eye on Kingdon, Randolph and Harth, who were distributed at three points of the compass. True, in a situation of the sort, he gave but little heed to Kingdon and just a little more to Harth, who he thought was principally bulk and strength. But Randolph had also speed, skill and silence at his command—he was an adversary worthy of Marsallow's closest attention.

Annette reached her feet, Marsallow's pawing left hand within an ace of her shoulder, and she lunged desperately in the general direction of a wine palm, just as Harth dived headlong for Marsallow's legs.

The huge Spaniard, too intent upon Annette and upon Randolph, was not prepared for the thudding weight of Harth's shoulders behind his knees. He staggered, stumbled a step or two, tried desperately to straighten, but caught his toe in the far reaching root of a mango tree and came down. The stubby base of the wine palm stopped his sprawling slide with a nasty crunching thump and Randolph's crosswise leap for his neck was quite unnecessary.

Marsallow had lost his gun and his senses simultaneously, and the inert mass of him, stretched in the shadow of the wine palm, was incredibly and terribly still. Even Harth, scrambling breathlessly to his feet, and testing the stability of his legs with caution, stood looking down upon the silent, unmoving hulk as at a miracle.

"The luck—was with—me—that time," he gasped fervently, when he was quite sure Marsallow was not getting up. "Is—is his neck—broken?"

"No such luck as that," Randolph announced, clambering from Marsallow's shoulders. "Just stunned, I think." He glanced quickly at Kingdon. "Hadn't you better get the girl aboard ship now, sir, before he has a chance to interfere again?"

Annette was staring down at Marsallow, her right hand still fumbling inside the kimono.

"The ship," she exclaimed in a rather absent whisper. "Oh, please, yes—and very quickly. The—the time to kill him is not yet."

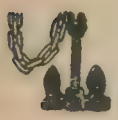
Kingdon glanced at her questioningly, but offered no comment.

"Where's that watchboy?" he asked. "The fellow who led us down here?"

"He vamoosed when we showed up," Harth growled. "He's an African Merchants' Company Kroo boy. One of their gig crew. The Barlow beach watchboys never come farther than the powder house, so I imagine you'll find your canoe waiting for you at the gig wharf."

Kingdon glanced at Marsallow, then saw that Randolph had taken possession of the Spanish giant's gun and was focusing the muzzle on the middle of Marsallow's broad back.

"It was a good job you two decided to keep an eye on us," he said with a wry smile that measured his own scanty inches with the Spaniard's all too generous surplus. "My head is going to sing for days, and all he did to me was shove me out of his way." He touched Annette's arm. "Let's go. I'm quite sure we haven't a second to waste." Then, over his shoulder to Harth, "Better put the government beach fence between you and that gentleman. He has a gift for surprises."



KINGDON did not wait to see if Harth and Randolph followed the advice. He hurried Annette away along the water front toward the gig wharf, and found that the girl, with just a single, quick look behind her, needed no special prompting to leave the scene of the storm behind her. Her relief, when they found the expected canoe and several Kroo boys at the gig wharf, was manifest.

The boy who had carried the note to Captain Duncan had not yet reported and Kingdon hoped, for the Kroo boy's sake, that Marsallow had not been foolish enough to go too far. Kingdon did not really think Marsallow had. The Spaniard's admission that he had in some way interfered with the messenger to Duncan indicated that nothing very serious had happened to the boy.

Except for expressing regret that she had not thanked "the brave gentlemen" who had come to her rescue, Annette had sunk into silence again, and they were out in the blackness of midstream heading for the *Ganna-Ganna* companion ladder before she asked, with her eyes on a far dark corner of Barlow's beach—

"The Señor Randolph—he is your friend?"

"I hope so," Kingdon answered with a slight smile. "He is one of my assistants."

"Oh," she said flatly. "You do not know his—people? His mother? His father? Who they have been?"

Kingdon shook his head.

"No. I know little or nothing of his antecedents. Why?"

"It—it is nothing," the girl said, and the life seemed suddenly to have gone out of her voice. "I hope Marsallow do not have the chance to hurt him."

"I hope not," Kingdon said; he paused a moment, then asked mildly, "but what about Harth? Doesn't he come in for some commendation? He was there, too, you know."

"Harth?" Annette had to concentrate on the name to bring it back to memory. "He is ver' kind, ver' brave; but it is not the man I am think about. It is the face. The face of this Señor Randolph." She looked ahead toward the looming shadow that was the *Ganna-Ganna*. "If the captain of the ship," she said thoughtfully, "will take me and I am then free of the Marsallow, I—" she stopped and her voice dropped to a whisper. "But it is not to believe. Not till I have kill Marsallow with my own hand!"

Kingdon nodded understandingly and was not in the least amazed. If anything, he wondered why, since she hated the brute so much, she had not killed him long ago.

Half an hour later Kingdon stood at the head of the *Ganna-Ganna's* companion ladder saying good night to his friend, Captain Duncan, who had been routed out of bed. Annette was in her cabin rubbing an embrocation into a badly bruised and discolored shoulder, staring absently into space. The pain, the excitement, the fear of Marsallow and her hatred of him, everything seemed to have drifted into the background of a thought or a memory that dominated all else. Even her words to Kingdon, sincere as they had been, had a detached, faraway note in them.

"That girl," Duncan was saying, "has something more than this Spaniard on her mind. She isn't afraid. She's hypnotized."

"I know, Jim," Kingdon agreed mildly. "But don't let any of your officers bother her about it. Apparently she's never been taken on her face value in her life and I think she's getting quite a kick out of it."

"Good," Duncan said. "Her face value suits me. And if the Spanish Goliath tries to put a foot on my decks without a warrant from the district commissioner—"

"You'd better borrow a machine gun from the barracks," Kingdon interrupted, and laughed. "Good night, Jim. Sorry I had to wake you up. I'll see you after breakfast."

Duncan grumbled something about being able to handle Marsallow without any help from the barracks, and went back to bed. Kingdon dropped down the com-

panion ladder and prayerfully ordered his Kroo boys to turn the canoe's nose toward his own beach.

His manner, however, was not at all timorous or diffident. Like Annette, he was thinking too much. Not of the girl, particularly. Or of Marsallow. Or of the broken appointment with Alphabet Colton, or the treachery of the watchboy who had really been a Kroo boy from the African Merchants' beach. Not even of Annette's involuntary protestation to the effect that she was not Marsallow's niece.

Kingdon was thinking exclusively of Randolph, whose face alone had meant so much to Annette that battle and the imminent danger of sudden death could not induce her to forget it.

Randolph was an interesting young man. An unusual young man; almost as full of surprising possibilities as Marsallow himself.

Kingdon thought it was perhaps just the right time to ask Randolph a few questions.

CHAPTER IX

ANOTHER UNUSUAL MACBETH

BOTH Harth and Randolph were on the wharf waiting for Kingdon when his canoe slipped alongside. There seemed to be watchboys with lanterns all over the beach. Evidently Harth had emptied the Kroo house in honor of the redoubtable Marsallow.

"We skipped as soon as he showed signs of coming to life," Harth said at once. "And our headman tells me your messenger to Duncan came back swimming. He says Marsallow, in a canoe, was lying upriver a bit, evidently keeping an eye on everything that left the beach and when he saw that your messenger was headed for the *Ganna-Ganna*, he chased him and got your chit away from him. Then he chucked him into the water and made him swim home."

"But the African Merchants' Kroo boy?" Kingdon asked, stepping ashore. "How did he happen to—"

"Marsallow is stopping at the African Merchants' beach."

"Stopping there?"

"So I believe." Harth looked toward Randolph significantly.

But Randolph said nothing then. He turned rather abruptly and, because there was nothing else for them to do under the circumstances, they followed him off the wharf and up the stairs to the living quarters above the shop.

"Let's go into my office," Kingdon said when they reached the veranda. "It isn't worthwhile going to bed now. Must be at least five o'clock."

"Four-forty," Harth corrected wryly. "Would you mind if I got a couple of hours' sleep? I think Randolph would rather talk to you alone anyway."

Kingdon glanced at Randolph, then nodded to Harth and smiled.

"Didn't you say something about sneak-thieves visiting you after I left?"

"Two of them," Harth returned. "A slim one and a squat one, both very mysterious and very experienced in retreat. I haven't the least idea what they were after, but Randolph says he thinks he has a suspicion or two. Perhaps he'll tell you about them."

Again Kingdon glanced at Randolph, who was staring across the little side creek toward the premises of the African Merchants' Company.

"All right, Harth," Kingdon said. "I imagine Señor Marsallow has had enough for one evening."

"I hope so," Harth grunted and, with a nod to Randolph, turned and walked along the veranda to his own room.

Kingdon led the way into his office and went directly to his chair at his desk, waving Randolph to a seat on the couch. There was a low drone of Kroo voices coming up to them from the beach below and every darkened corner of beach and river seemed to be alive with unexpected possibilities. And not the least of these unexpected possibilities was Randolph himself who sat with his elbows on his knees and his fingertips together, staring

at a colorful native mat that was draped over the back of a Madeira chair.

Kingdon picked up a pipe, then put it down again and turned his whole attention upon Randolph.

"You wanted to talk to me?"

Randolph's glance came away from the mat.

"Yes, sir."

"What about?"

Randolph hesitated, chewed his underlip a moment or two, glanced out toward the veranda and the African Merchants' beach, then allowed his childlike blue eyes to come back to Kingdon.

"I'm afraid the jig's up, Mr. Kingdon, and I want to talk to you about this man Marsallow."

"Yes?" quite seriously.

"And this niece of his, Annette."

"What about them?"

Randolph had an earnest look.

"I'd advise you not to get mixed up in this thing, sir."

"No?" Kingdon smiled slightly. "I could give myself that much advice, but it wouldn't tell me anything."

Again Randolph hesitated, and again looked out toward the river.

"The girl is genuine enough," he said finally. "That is, she probably has no reason to believe she isn't. But this man Marsallow is not her uncle, simply because his sister was not her mother. His sister was only her nurse."

"Nurse?" Kingdon repeated. "What's Marsallow's object in perpetrating a fraud like that?"

"There's some property involved, sir."

"West African property? Trading interests of some sort?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how do you happen to know all this? Where do you come in?"

"I own it, sir."

The apologetic simplicity of Randolph's expression made Kingdon laugh in spite of himself. But he managed to nod seriously enough and to accept Randolph and his information without being very much surprised.

"I suppose you know the jig is up because Marsallow unexpectedly called here this evening. Does he know who you really are?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Did he recognize you?"

"He didn't have to. He's probably known all along that I've been here. But, of course, he didn't pay any attention to me. Under the circumstances, sir, he wouldn't."

"I see," Kingdon said dryly. "Or rather I'm trying to. Might I ask what the circumstances are?"

Randolph looked apologetic again.

"That's what I want to tell you. You see, you exercise a considerable influence over the girl, Annette. Any one could see that and—you don't mind listening, do you?"

Kingdon said he didn't mind.

"As a story it isn't much," Randolph began. "It's rather old stuff, in fact—Drury Lane melodrama kind of thing—and possibly a bit hard to swallow. But it has principally to do with the MacBeth interests; in other words, the African Merchants' Company." He glanced briefly across the creek. "My full name is John Randolph MacBeth, and my father and his brother, Ned MacBeth, were the founders of the African Merchants' Company. I imagine you've heard of them."

Kingdon's expression was not one of surprise; just amazed resignation. A MacBeth! Another and most unusual MacBeth come to stir the Oil Rivers into a froth of action.

Looking at John Randolph MacBeth, Kingdon could readily understand just how unusual two of him must have been; particularly two of him with a wealth of Oil Rivers experience behind them. He rose, moved around his desk and held out his hand, simply and most sincerely.

"I am glad to meet a son of John MacBeth," he said as Randolph also rose and, with no little embarrassment, shook hands. "I never chanced to meet either your father or your uncle, but I certainly heard enough about them when I first came out here. There's been a big change

in the African Merchants' stations since their day, particularly in the past few years."

Randolph nodded glumly.

"That's part of the story," he said, and his childlike blue eyes suddenly held a glint of steel that was sharp as a razor's edge.

Kingdon went back to his chair at his desk, filled his pipe, lighted it and listened.

"IT BEGAN with Uncle Ned's marriage to a Spanish girl in Las Palmas," Randolph said. "He brought her out here for a little while, then she went back to Las Palmas where she either died or disappeared after her baby girl was born. There was no proof of her death. When Uncle Ned went back to Las Palmas—and he always spent his leave there or in the south of Spain—the baby was in the care of a woman named Marsallow. She did not know where the mother had gone or what had happened to her, and though my uncle spent a small fortune trying to find out just what had happened to her, he had no success at all. And as the Marsallow woman was competent and eager to continue as the child's nurse, he left the baby in her charge.

"He told my father all about it, of course, and my father naturally passed the story along to my mother. That is how we know the Marsallow woman was the child's nurse, and not its mother. But we have no written proof of this. Not a line. We have, in fact, no written proof of anything that we happen to know about the case. When Uncle Ned died, just a few years later, his papers and things revealed not a trace of his marriage. No letters or certificates or photographs. Not a thing. Possibly the experience or the memory had been such a disappointing one, he had destroyed all reminders of it, and as my father died before he did, our only evidence is my mother's memory; her memory of the things my father told her about it.

"In any event, we had no reason to suspect anything very unusual until, as it happened, Uncle Ned died out here of blackwater fever, and Marsallow's sister went out in a typhoid epidemic something less than a month later. Then we got the surprise of our lives. Her death certificate designated her as the Señora Lolita MacBeth, and we learned for the first time that she was the wife of my uncle who, according to Marsallow, provided for her maintenance and that of the child, but refused to live with her.

"Marsallow has claimed and has made good the claim that his sister, who was a dancer or a performer of some sort, married my uncle under her stage name of Lolita Ramirez. This story tallies with the name on the marriage certificate, and my mother remembers that Uncle Ned's wife's name was something like Lolita Ramirez. And there isn't any doubt about the fact that Marsallow has the papers. He has a bagful of them—everything he has to have, plus. In fact he has so much that it makes me just that much more suspicious."

Randolph grinned sourly and glanced glumly across the creek.

"And we have nothing. Though I hate to say it, we are not even sure that the baby Uncle Ned saw when he reached Las Palmas after his wife died or disappeared, was his baby. It might have been any old baby! But we have no quarrel with the girl. Since Uncle Ned accepted her we have always been willing to accept her, but we are not willing to accept Marsallow as the girl's guardian, counselor and guide. No, sir!

"Though we have no proof of anything at all, we know that Uncle Ned was not a liar. He would not tell my father that his wife had disappeared if he did not believe she had, and he would not have gone to the expense and trouble he did to try to find her, if he were simply avoiding the necessity of living with a wife he no longer wanted. Uncle Ned was a number of things, Mr. Kingdon—careless, devil-may-care, and always ready to take a chance on anything—but he was neither a scoundrel nor a fool. And my father,

when he told a story, did not get his facts twisted. He had a reputation for accuracy of that sort, and if he said the Marsallow woman was the child's nurse that is precisely what he was told; and if Uncle Ned told him that, it was true.

"We know that. We're sure of it. But we haven't a thing to prove it except the word of mouth evidence of dead men!"

Randolph paused, but Kingdon, puffing slowly on his pipe, did not make any comment; just nodded encouragement in the face of evidence that was most discouraging.

"However," Randolph went on, "my father told my mother one detail that might mean something if we had any luck. He was talking about the uncanny cleverness of the native thief and cited an experience Uncle Ned's wife had had while she was out here. She had brought with her some trinkets and things of the sort in a small jewel casket, and everything in the casket was stolen, piece by piece, and finally the casket went too. When my mother asked if the things were valuable, my father said that, as far as Uncle Ned was concerned, the only thing he had any regret about was a lion's head locket his wife wanted him to have. And apparently he regretted the loss of this principally because, as he said to my father:

" 'If that damned thief hadn't taken that lion's head locket I'd show you just how beautiful Spanish women can really be, and how the strain repeats itself over and over again with amazing accuracy. Her own and her mother's picture were in that locket and if one of the pictures wasn't a tintype, you'd swear they were twins!'

"I've heard that quotation so often it is almost a litany, and my father didn't get that story twisted either. Of course, even if we found the locket, it might not prove very much, unless it happened to establish beyond any doubt the identity of Annette—" Randolph smiled slightly—"and could be compared with any existing photograph of Marsallow's sister. But it's a darned slim limb to hang Marsallow on, and I hate to think it is about all we have to offer the brute in exchange for his papers.

"So far, of course, because the girl was a minor until recently, he hasn't been able to collect anything except the allowance awarded by the court for the girl's maintenance and education, most of which he's probably pocketed."

"No probably about it," said Kingdon, contributing his first interruption.

"No, I'm afraid not. And the girl's desire to get away from him makes me want to help her to get her rightful share without any interference from Marsallow; and because of your influence over her, you could help her by helping me."

"How?"

"Well, you see, sir, the situation has now reached the critical stage. Marsallow has been waiting for years for this girl to grow up and come into actual possession of her half interest. And, of course—well, you've seen Marsallow. You know what that means. And I'll be hanged if I'm going to have that mountainous swine for a partner."

KINGDON nodded slowly and sympathetically. He knew exactly what lay ahead of his junior assistant and Annette. The girl had been brought to Nigeria to establish her claims in person in the courts of the colony; and principally for the purpose of appointing Marsallow, under the laws of the colony, her sole representative with full powers to act for her in all matters relating to the administration and disposition of the property in question.

Annette apparently did not relish the situation at all. She had no hunger for possession. Her one consuming desire was to get as far away from Marsallow as possible.

Kingdon regarded Randolph appraisingly.

"What was your object in coming out here disguised as a junior assistant for Marsden & Company?"

"I wanted to get a look at things first hand."

"What things?" Kingdon asked.

"Things as they are across the creek there." Randolph nodded in the direction of the African Merchants' Company. "We have, as you know, stations all over these rivers, but that one has always been regarded as headquarters, possibly because it was our first. Changes in policy and so forth usually express themselves first over there; and the powers that be, in Liverpool, have been switching agents so rapidly of late, I'm not sure I know the name of the latest arrival."

"Charnton," Kingdon informed him, and smiled. "Doesn't the Liverpool office know you are out here?"

"Some of it does and some of it doesn't, but I suppose it will all know it now. You see, I came out here straight from college, and haven't been in the Liverpool office in several years. But I had occasion to meet Marsallow twice in London after I reached my majority—and twice was once too often."

Kingdon nodded slowly and smiled.

"Is all this why you have found it necessary to leave the beach after we are all in bed—to go snooping across the creek?"

"That's some of the reason."

"Why your mysterious interest in native villages?"

"I'm looking for that jewel casket."

Kingdon hardly believed his ears.

"I hope you haven't been entering indiscriminate mud huts, expecting to fall over that jewel casket in the dark. After all these years!"

Randolph smiled in spite of his momentary glum outlook upon life, then glanced once more across the creek.

"Hardly," he said absently. "There was a girl came into the kernel store one day not long after I got here, and she was wearing a piece of jewelry that looked like a heavy jet earring. It was fastened in some way to a large string of beads and it looked distinctly Spanish to me. I asked her where she got it and she said her mother had given it to her, and added that her mother had lots more at home." Randolph smiled reminiscently. "Well, that trail was no good. Neither were any of the others that came along later. I followed them up all right, and got into the places they led me to and out again, but the trash those people own is frightful."

Kingdon studied this scion of the house of MacBeth for fully a minute. Then he said quietly:

"You'll die very suddenly if you keep that up. Don't do it. That's no way to go about finding anything out here."

"No? How should one go about it?"

"Leave that to me. Am I to understand you have no quarrel with the girl?"

"None at all. In fact, now that I know how she feels toward Marsallow I want to help her get away from him. And because you have so much influence over her, I wondered if you could persuade her to visit my mother."

Kingdon nodded.

"I wanted you to say that because it provides the girl with a definite destination. We'll send her direct to your mother and do it quite properly under the name of Annette MacBeth."

"It's darned good of you to—"

"Unless Marsallow is deliberately looking for trouble," Kingdon went on, "he won't board the *Ganna-Ganna* by force, and he can't take the girl off the ship without the help of a warrant." Kingdon rose and looked very significantly up at his junior assistant. "I don't want him for a neighbor any more than you want him for a partner."

"I'm glad of that, sir," Randolph said simply and respectfully. "And—er—I'm sorry I cheated about my purpose in being here."

Kingdon smiled.

"I'm not. You've been an interesting experience. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

John Randolph MacBeth turned and walked rapidly toward the assistant's end of the house. Tall, straight, magnificently proportioned, his step uncannily light and soundless as any cat's, he was the personification of speed, grace and a kind of lightning-like force that could, very possibly, be just as destructive as it

seemed hopeful of being constructive.

Leaning idly against the veranda rail, the little trading agent watched his junior assistant go, and the quiet in his eyes was just a trifle disturbed.

He knew this Unusual MacBeth had a destiny; a destiny he could not escape. But what a pity to feed a magnificent body like that into the hungry, fiery mouth of the Moloch of the swamps!

CHAPTER X

THE THUNDERER

SHORTLY after eight A.M, when trading beach house boys were emerging from the galley to pursue their respective white masters with breakfast trays, Kingdon had his eggs served on the veranda so that he could observe a grubby little freighter, that had once been a branch boat, lean herself in a tired kind of way against the African Merchants' Company's main wharf.

She had been all night and most of the morning getting there, and that she had arrived at all was undoubtedly a credit to Scurvy Murvey's knowledge of the Niger's creeks and currents. Kingdon was sure that even his friend Captain Duncan of the *Ganna-Ganna* would concede this much, despite the fact that Duncan, in all probability, was pacing his own bridge and swearing at the branch boat skipper for delaying him. For the *Ganna-Ganna*, all ready to heave up anchor and pass downriver to tie up alongside Perkins & Gray's wharf, was compelled to wait until the branch boat stopped veering hither and yon and decided which wharf it was headed for.

This decision having been duly made and adhered to, after much debate with the current and an argumentative kind of steering gear, the lordly-by-comparison *Ganna-Ganna* was then permitted to pass downstream to Perkins & Gray's wharf.

Perkins & Gray's beach was one beach removed from that of the African Merchants' Company, and as the *Ganna-Ganna* went by, Kingdon thought he saw Marsallow leaning against the hand crane on the African Merchants' rather tumbledown oil wharf.

He could not be sure of this because there were too many palms and a string of nicely whitewashed and stenciled puncheons of palm oil in the way, to say nothing of the hand crane on the far side of which the figure stood. But Kingdon thought he recognized a familiar, sloppy panama hat which seemed to tower above everything in sight except the coconut palms and the branch boat's funnel.

In due time a new and almost shiny surf boat put off from the African Merchants' oil wharf, bearing its cargo of whitewashed puncheons of oil, all duly prepared for shipment on the *Ganna-Ganna*. And the sloppy panama went with them.

"The fool'll die if he doesn't wear any more hat than that after breakfast," Kingdon muttered, and called for his house boy. "Bring helmet," he ordered when the boy appeared. "And tell Jonah make launch ready one time. *Savez?*"

"Yes, sah. One time, sah. I tell him, sah."

It was not customary for white men to transport themselves in surf boats with puncheons of oil, particularly when they could very readily walk to the ship they were trying to reach. And just why Marsallow did not want to board the *Ganna-Ganna* by way of Perkins & Gray's wharf was not clear to Kingdon until, when he was about halfway down to Perkins & Gray's gig wharf in the launch, Marsallow's strategy became unusually clear.

The Spaniard boarded the *Ganna-Ganna* astride the second puncheon of oil and he was heading for the ship's saloon deck before a startled second officer had time to catch his breath or realize that the huge lump of human freight had actually performed the trick and lived.

Kingdon, however, had no doubt whatever about Marsallow's capacity for being alive. Whenever the man mountain decided to move in a given direction he apparently always arrived. The previous

evening he had arrived where and when he was least expected, and now he was busily arriving even more unexpectedly from a direction no one would have suspected.

Perkins & Gray's gig wharf seemed a thousand miles away. Anything could happen in the interval of minutes, and Kingdon was afraid that all that needed to happen was an inadvertent meeting between Annette and Marsallow; a meeting Marsallow was unquestionably trying to bring about with all possible dispatch.

The girl might defy him of course, but Kingdon doubted this. It was one thing to obey an impulse and run away in the dark, and quite another to make that impulse good in the light of day, looking Marsallow in the eye at the same time. It was not that Annette lacked courage, but her fear of involving others and of bringing them within range of Marsallow's revengeful displeasure, was always a potent factor in her submission to Marsallow's will.

There were probably other reasons; reasons that had been an inseparable part of her "education" after the death of Marsallow's sister, or even before that time. For, in Annette's eyes, Marsallow was undoubtedly force personified; a force that, when stirred into action and released in any direction at all, spelled disaster for any one luckless enough to stand in its path. To her, rooted in the marrow of her bones, there was no other like *that*.

Yet Kingdon did not hurry when he reached Perkins & Gray's gig wharf. He walked deliberately to the main wharf and greeted Perkins & Gray's beach clerk with a genial good morning that had not the slightest trace of anxiety in it. The beach clerk, whose name was Bartlett, and who was having a rather late early breakfast on the wharf, with the tray resting on one bale of print cloth while he sat on another, was on the verge of rising, but Kingdon said at once:

"Don't get up and don't let me interrupt. Your breakfast is long enough past due already. I'm just going to take the liberty of boarding Duncan's ship. How is Kennedy? A little better?"

Kennedy was Perkins & Gray's junior assistant.

"Yes, thank the Lord," Bartlett said devoutly. "He gave Doc Farley and us all a dark and dusty scare a couple of nights ago, and the Doc surely does hate to lose 'em—particularly that young. Balloch coming round all right?"

"Much better this morning, thanks."

Kingdon was moving toward the *Ganna-Ganna's* rope ladder as he spoke, and no one would have suspected that he had anything so huge as Marsallow on his mind.

"I'm glad about Kennedy. Pretty rough on the youngster to get that sick so soon. Say chin-chin to him for me, will you?"

"Thanks. I will. Want any help with that ladder?"

"Hardly." Kingdon smiled and proceeded to climb the rope ladder in a leisurely fashion that made the trick seem simple enough. "Rope ladders are a specialty of mine."

HE REACHED the railing, climbed through and strolled to the companion stairs leading to the ex-mail boat's upper deck. There was no sign of Marsallow, and Kingdon purposely went past the skipper's cabin in the hope that Duncan was there. But luck was not with him and he dipped down the saloon companion stairs praying that Annette had not been rash enough to have breakfast in the saloon.

Apparently she had. Halfway down the saloon companion stairs, which were semicircular and led down to the bar and the saloon from two sides, Kingdon paused sharply.

"No, he have not the right! He is the devil, but he have not the right. I am not the Miss MacBeth. I am not the niece. I am nobody. He is not the uncle. It is lie. I am eighteen years. I am free. Please, Señor Captain! Please to believe he has not the right."

Annette's voice, frantic with the fear of the threatened return to loneliness already upon her, had a pitiful note of appeal in it, and the things she said were evidently the result of shock and sheer desperation. She would say anything and do almost anything rather than go back to the life from which she had escaped, not much more than twelve hours before.

"She is excite," Marsallow's smooth voice explained simply. "I am regret to make the trouble like this, but I have not the wish to make the report to the commissioner that my niece is abduct by the Señor Kingdon."

"Hunh," Duncan grunted. "Why are you so considerate? Are you afraid Kingdon's explanation would be too good for your comfort?"

"My comfort, Señor Captain? I am regret I do not understand."

"Well, you understand this," Duncan said quite definitely. "I don't know you. I don't know anything about you. But I saw how you came aboard my ship, and if I had been in the second officer's shoes, you'd have taken a sudden bath in the river. *Savez?*"

"I am regret—"

"You regret nothing. And you don't take any passenger of mine off my ship without a warrant from the district commissioner. Is that plain enough?"

Marsallow seemed to think it was. Even Annette's exclamations of relief, uttered in excited Spanish and English, did not disturb the resultant quiet.

"Sit down and finish your breakfast," Duncan grunted to the girl. "Come on, Marsallow. It won't do you any good to hang around here. Get up on deck."

"My niece," Marsallow said smoothly, "she is come with me."

"No! He have not the right. I am not—"

"Get up on deck, Marsallow! You can't come aboard my ship as you did and then get away with lording it over me. Steward! Send the chief officer to me, and tell him to bring a gang of Kroo boys."

Kingdon had not been aware of the presence of a steward, but in less than five seconds the man appeared, looking as if it were a considerable relief to get away from there. He did not ascend Kingdon's side of the saloon companion, and as the steward went up, Kingdon came farther down. As he did so he took from his trousers' pocket several English florins which, in the Niger country were the standard coin of the realm. It was known and reckoned as "one piece", and was the basis for all price calculations in all trading transactions between the native and the white man.

"My niece she is come with me." Marsallow's voice, if anything, was more sinister than ever. "It is my wish, Señor Captain. And if I am assault by the officers and the crew, the puncheons of oil will not go in the ship, and the damages for the assault, Señor Captain, will be many English pounds."

Duncan laughed quite heartily, and again told Annette to finish her breakfast and leave her troubles to him. Then, to Marsallow, as if he were an afterthought:

"Not that it makes any difference—but what authority have you to say the African Merchants' oil won't go in this ship?"

"I *am* the authority, señor. The African Merchant's Company is *me*."

"What's that?"

"It is lie! I am not the niece. I am not the Miss MacBeth. I am—"

A Spanish oath and a thunderous word of command silenced the girl quite suddenly, just as if a hand had been clapped over her mouth. And it had. Kingdon, now standing just inside the saloon, saw Duncan, almost livid with rage, trying to pick himself up from the deck, while Annette, with Marsallow's great hand well-nigh obliterating her whole face, was being lifted bodily from her chair.

MARSALLOW had not hit Duncan; just pushed him out of the way as if he were a bothersome boy; and Kingdon wondered—and supposed Duncan was wondering, too—what happened when Marsallow really did strike out.

Whether the Spaniard had actually lost his temper this time or was merely hinting at what would be likely to happen if he did, and was depending upon his status as a shipper to take care of any fuss Captain Duncan might be inclined to make, Kingdon was not sure. But, quite evidently, the man mountain meant business, probably because there was too much at stake and he had waited too long to allow so rich a reward to slip through his fingers with the end of a very long road so plainly in sight.

He hauled the girl out of her chair and paid not the slightest attention to her struggles or to her thoroughly well meant efforts to use her hands and feet to the best advantage; and in the same motion, ignoring Duncan completely, he spun toward the doorway and Kingdon.

Then he paused sharply and stopped. Surprise was his first sensation. His next was not so clear. He did not seem to know what to think or to do. Had the chief officer, with the *Ganna-Ganna's* whole crew behind him, stood where Kingdon did, this would have been the expected thing. Kingdon was not. He was just about the most unexpected thing that could have happened to Marsallow at that moment. Particularly after the so recent episode in the dark of Barlow's beach.

Kingdon was not doing anything in particular; just standing in plain sight idly jingling several two-shilling pieces in his left hand; picking them up with his right hand and dropping them back into his palm again. He was very quiet about it too, and when one of the florins slipped to the deck and rolled away from him, he put out his foot to stop it but, somehow, managed to kick it in Marsallow's direction instead.

Marsallow's little sharp eyes watched the coin. Kingdon watched Marsallow. Marsallow's eyes had a sudden glint of doubt and fear in them. Kingdon's smiled.

"Better allow Miss Annette to finish her breakfast," he advised quietly. "You'll only get into a lot of trouble and lose a lot of money if you don't. Not silver either, Marsallow. Gold. And lots of it."

"Damn you!" Duncan roared behind Marsallow, while Annette struggled to free herself with greater desperation than ever. "If you were twice as big—"

Kingdon carelessly dropped another coin.

"It's all right, Jim," he said to Duncan. "The Señor Marsallow did not know he can't manhandle a girl like that out here." Then to Marsallow, whose greedy glance just naturally followed the rolling coin. "The shipping company in Liverpool might let you off, Señor, but the district commissioner wouldn't. Not if you were her uncle ten times over." Kingdon's voice changed sharply, "Come out of it, you fool! Do you want to lose everything now! After all these years!"

Marsallow came out of it with a jolt. Evidently he had not thought of the district commissioner—just the shipping company; and Kingdon's manner of making himself perfectly clear had the effect of throwing Marsallow into a fog of doubt and quite unmistakable fear. It was all so very different—so unexpected—so quiet and so sure and so utterly lacking in antagonism; the kind of thing he could not understand at all.

He did not exactly drop Annette to the deck as hurrying footsteps sounded on the companion stairs, but his hold upon her relaxed in such fashion that she slid from his grasp and would have fallen had not Captain Duncan held her on her feet. He drew her rapidly out of Marsallow's reach, and put her behind him out of trouble.

The Spaniard, however, was paying no attention to the girl or to him. His whole interest was absorbed by Kingdon and the coins he had dropped.

"Let's go up on deck," Kingdon invited, as the chief officer, whose name was Elliot, appeared in the doorway, backed by more than half a dozen Kroo boys. "Will it be all right, Jim, if I see him off the premises?"

"Get him out of here," Duncan growled

to his chief officer. "And see that he doesn't come back unless he has a warrant and a file of Yoruba with him."

Elliot glanced at Kingdon, then estimated Marsallow's bulk with a trained eye. A slight smile lurked in his eyes.

"Get up on deck," he ordered the Spaniard briefly.

Marsallow paused, regarding Elliot in a noncommittal fashion. He could understand *him*. He could understand Duncan. And Annette. Opposition of that sort was the food he had thrived upon all his life. But Kingdon . . . The Spaniard stooped and picked up one of the coins Kingdon had dropped.

"Your money, Señor Kingdon," he said, and placed the coin very carefully in Kingdon's outstretched hand. "I am regret that I am make you so excite that you lose your money from your hand so much." He smiled an oily smile, but avoided Kingdon's eyes. "Las' night I have the so bad luck, señor—the so very bad luck with the three. But the bad luck is not always to me. Soon it will be my very good luck—and the pleasure of my niece—to drink the so fine wine—"

"Get up on deck!" Elliot ordered again. "I haven't all day to stand around here."

Marsallow smiled blandly upon Kingdon and, with a mere gesture, cuffed Elliot, who was a good light heavyweight, the width of the saloon. Elliot stopped only when a table stopped him and he leaned against it dizzily.

"*Adios, señor,*" Marsallow said to Kingdon and passed on, just as if the spreading knot of Kroo boys beyond the saloon companion, and Captain Duncan's bellow of rage behind him, were of no consequence whatever.

ALL KROO boys will not fight for their white masters. But Elliot's gangs always liked him because he fed them well and got results out of them without the help of a hippo hide thong. Also orders from the captain were orders, and Duncan, rushing past Kingdon, was evidently determined to be master of his own ship. Kingdon stood aside. In a case of the kind he was useless and the fact that he knew it always put a set, strained stare into his eyes, particularly now as he looked upon the physical perfections of several of the Kroo boys who were ready to close in upon Marsallow like a pack of hounds the moment he stepped outside the saloon. Once started, too, Kroo boys were ugly, tearing fighters, and unless Marsallow were fool enough to use a gun . . .

Annette's fingers touched Kingdon's arm.

"He will kill them!" she whispered. "They do not know this Marsallow. And I have bring all this trouble—"

Her voice just trailed away, leaving her lips slightly parted. Her right hand was at her throat, but it began to slip little by little inside her blouse—a hesitant, fearful movement that tried once more to face an inevitable thing, and once more shrank from it, but was grimly determined to go on.

Marsallow scarcely hesitated, yet made no move toward his gun. Kingdon saw him stand in the saloon companion a moment, saw him step almost leisurely into the square beyond and saw the muscular black and brown bodies climb in.

They leaped for his shoulders, dived at his legs, tried to pinion his arms and pull him down by the sheer weight and strength of their attack. And they were not listening to Duncan now. Only to their own headman who was giving sharp orders in Kroo, and was waiting on the outer fringe of the scrimmage, apparently ready to make use of a *machete* if necessary.

Marsallow did not appear to brace himself to meet that first impact. His giant body rocked and swayed in an almost gentle movement to right, then left, and his great arms, in a semi-fighting pose, weaved curiously, not unlike wabbly piston rods that were slowly gathering speed.

The furious threshing of arms and legs, the nasty crunch of bone on bone, the savage grunting snarls of the Kroo boys

punctuated by sudden screams of pain, and then by a rather climactic moan that died in a fearsome choking gurgle—all this told its own story of that first moment or two. A Kroo boy was down among the stamping naked feet of his fellows and another came hurtling backward through the saloon companion, the whites of his eyes gleaming like headlights and a limp right arm hanging at his side.

Elliot, still rather dizzy, but brushing eagerly past Duncan to lend a very experienced hand in the business of throwing Marsallow off the ship, paused just long enough to lean the Kroo boy against the skipper, then sprang past them both into the human gale that was screaming in the square.

He dodged another staggering Kroo boy who was clutching at his stomach, ducked under Marsallow's flailing right arm and tried to worm himself into a position to get home a really satisfying punch to the Spaniard's jaw. But there were too many Kroo boys, and if any moment was the wrong moment for entrance to that fight, Elliot had chosen it.

For it was then that Marsallow, swaying and rocking and leaning away from the storm, suddenly paused. A second later his huge body twisted sharply, then doubled and straightened again, as if he were a coiled spring gone wild, and he seemed to shed Kroo boys like a mastiff shaking himself after a swim. Then he drove straight for Elliot and the companion stairs leading to the lower deck, one mallet-like fist disposing of the headman and his *machete* as if he were of no more consequence than a bothersome mosquito.

And there was not the slightest doubt about the fact that Marsallow was moving—moving with all the devastating power and speed of an express. Elliot, directly in his path, tried to sidestep and duck the seemingly awkward, mallet-like blows of Marsallow's fists, and a moment later found himself sprawling across a groaning Kroo boy, wondering if his neck had snapped.

Marsallow did not pause. He leaped for the companion stairs, and the sloppy panama dipped out of sight just as if he had dropped through a trapdoor.

Only Duncan's choleric, incoherent rage and indignation followed him; this and the groans that spoke most eloquently of the Spaniard's victory.

Kingdon saw the sloppy panama disappear, then glanced at Annette and saw her right hand drop from the neck of her blouse with a tired movement that was like a sigh. Her eyes had a staring, fearful look in them that shivered.

"Not—yet," she whispered. "Always, not yet. But, some time—some time . . ." She shuddered and involuntarily drew nearer to Kingdon as if she hoped that he might afford her some sort of shelter from the inevitable.

Kingdon found her hand to quiet her excitement, and the grip of her fingers closing eagerly about his own seemed oddly like a pledge or a promise.

CHAPTER XI

MACBETH'S GIRL

WHEN, on the surface at least, some measure of quiet had been restored and most of the visible traces of combat had been cleared away, Captain Duncan paced back and forth in the saloon, behind Annette's chair, and threatened Marsallow with every dire penalty within and without the law.

"Don't think of it, Jim," Kingdon advised quietly. "Not that way. He's a shipper, you know, and a big one, and your home office wouldn't be inclined to see it your way. Just—"

"Shipper, hell!" Duncan roared, forgetting that Annette was a young lady. "He can't come aboard my ship and knock me and my passengers and officers and crew around as he pleases! And what are you defending him for? Giving him advice about the money he'll lose! I thought you took this girl away from him?"

Kingdon smiled.

"Surely I did. And she's going to stay away from him."

"Oh, Señor Captain, I am so sorry. The fault is with me. I have bring you trouble—"

"Finish your breakfast," Duncan rumbled from out of the depths of his offended dignity. "Don't worry about us." He turned to Kingdon belligerently. "What's your object in giving him advice about the money he'll lose?"

Kingdon laughed, then said quite seriously.

"I was just reminding him of his god."

"Eh?"

"Money. Every man has a pet weakness and money is his. You don't suppose I was jiggling money in my hand like that just to appear nonchalant?" He moved around a table and picked up the second two-shilling piece. "What are you going to do to fix him?"

Duncan paused.

"Hunh? Money, eh? How much would a nice fat fine hurt him?"

"Very much. But I'd think it over if I were you. Meantime I want to book Miss Annette's passage officially." He glanced toward the girl and smiled as encouragingly as he could. "Why were you so insistent that you were not Miss MacBeth? You can't get rid of Marsallow by denying your identity."

Annette did not answer. She looked down at her hands, then picked up a fork and made a nervous pretense of eating.

"MacBeth?" Duncan queried. "What MacBeth is that? Not the Unusual MacBeths who started the African Merchants?"

Kingdon nodded slowly with his eyes upon Annette.

"Your passenger, Jim, is the daughter of the late Edward MacBeth and the cousin of my junior assistant, Randolph, who happens to be John Randolph MacBeth—John MacBeth's son."

"My God!" Duncan breathed devoutly, and swung sharply round in Annette's direction to find that his passenger was staring wide eyed at Kingdon.

"He—he *is* the same!" she whispered. "The same like the MacBeth from Africa who came to Las Palmas so ver' long ago. He is the same—like *him!*"

Kingdon nodded.

"The man who came to see you in Las Palmas, Annette, was your father. My assistant is your cousin."

"No!" Annette whispered hoarsely and looked everywhere except at Kingdon or Duncan. "No, it is the lie. I am not the cousin. I am not the niece. I am not the Miss MacBeth. I am nobody! It is all the lie; I am nobody! Please, I—I have not the fear now. No. It is gone. The lie is gone. Marsallow is gone. He can not make me to tell the lie—no, not once more!"

Kingdon said nothing and, for a minute or two, did nothing. Neither did Duncan. He was too intent upon staring at this passenger of his who was the daughter of an Unusual MacBeth.

Then, desperately, as if she were fighting for the freedom, not only of her physical existence but also of her immortal soul, her hand dipped nervously into the pocket of her blouse and she said:

"I—señor, please to pardon. My—my father I do not know. But my mother—" she smiled, and the radiance of it was possibly the most beautifully pitiful thing Kingdon had ever seen— "she is here. Look."

And she brought forth a locket in the shape of a lion's head.

In an instant she had sprung the catch then held the locket out to Kingdon.

"Look, my mother. And my grandmother. You can tell which is my mother?" She laughed as she said this; a little broken laugh that had a hungry, reminiscent note in it.

Kingdon took the locket and looked at the pictures, while Duncan examined them over his shoulder.

"Three of a kind!" Duncan exclaimed after a pause, with a glance at Annette. "But that tintype, child, won't hold out much longer. Better get a real good photographer to make a reproduction." Then with another closer look at the photographs and at Annette, "Ned Mac-

Beth's daughter, eh? The little kid he used to go and see in Las Palmas? Well, well! Where have you been keeping yourself all these years? And how did you get mixed up with anything like Marsallow?"

ANNETTE did not answer. She was looking nervously at Kingdon, and at the same time was trying to believe that she heard Captain Duncan aright. Evidently she did not credit the import of what he said as having any real value; not when the truth would be told.

Kingdon closed the locket and carefully handed it back to her.

"Your mother was a very beautiful woman, Annette," he said quietly. "And she was the wife of Edward MacBeth. But she was not Marsallow's sister. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes—oh, yes, señor. She was not the sister of Marsallow. No. Not at all." She gripped the locket very tightly. "I am not the Marsallow niece. I am not the Miss MacBeth. It is lie, señor. I—I am nobody! And I do not understand how you say my mother was the wife of the MacBeth who came to see me from Africa. That I do not understand, señor."

Kingdon was puzzled and looked it. Duncan grunted and cleared his throat, and the *impasse* held until Kingdon asked gently—

"Who gave you that locket, Annette?" Annette's eyes brightened at once.

"The Señor MacBeth from Africa—the so handsome gentleman who was so much the same to my memory as the Señor Randolph."

Kingdon nodded encouragingly.

"Didn't you know he was your father?"

Annette shook her head.

"No, señor. That is lie. I am not the Miss MacBeth. Please to believe! It is the lie of this Marsallow and of his sister who is dead a long, long time."

Duncan looked at Kingdon and Kingdon looked at Duncan and both, quite obviously, were face to face with a blank wall. Then Kingdon, with the lion's head locket and the pictures therein as his one bit of absolute proof, asked the girl quietly—

"Do you remember when the Señor MacBeth from Africa gave you the locket?"

And again Annette's whole expression changed, and her face seemed all at once to become glorified, even though there was a lurking hint of longing in her eyes.

"It was the las' time," she said in a low voice, "the ver' las time, señor, he came to see me. I am then ver' little, but he gave me the locket in the garden and he show me the pictures and he say, 'This is your mother, Annette, and this is your grandmother. They are both twenty years. Is not that funny?" And then he laugh and kiss me many times and tell me to keep the locket ver' tight because it was lost once and mus' not be lost again."

Kingdon's eyebrows lifted understandingly and he nodded encouragement for her to go on.

"After that, señor, I am not sure. I am so ver' little then, but I ask him what is my mother's name, and he say Lolita. I am sure of that. And I ask him what is my grandmother name and he say Annette Ramirez—but of that, señor, I am not sure because—well, I am ver' little then, and it is part of the lie, and I do not know the lie from the true."

She glanced at the locket in her hand and turned it over and over nervously, and her voice sank again almost to a whisper.

"Then he go away. He laugh, he kiss me and he go away and—and he do not come back. He never come back and I am alone then and—and that is all."

Duncan looked down at his shoes and fumbled in search of a handkerchief. Kingdon moved a step nearer to the girl, then stopped as she suddenly laughed, that same broken little laugh that, small as it was, lifted above the shriek and rattle of the donkey engine aft.

"A long time, señor," she said and smiled. "I do with this locket like the

dog with the bone. I bury it in my small garden so that Marsallow and his sister will not take it away." Her eyes became steady and serious again. "Many years, señor, I have keep this locket ver' tight as he told me, because it is the only true thing I have known since he kiss me and go away. The only true thing, señor. All the rest is lies. Lies! But this, señor, is the truth. This is my mother. The mirror, señor, tell me this is true whenever I look in."

The voice of Perkins & Gray's beach clerk, shouting an order to his Kroo headman, and the clumping clatter of hoisting gear lowering to the wharf, did not in the least intrude upon the few moments of quiet that followed.

THE ONE true thing! Her own face in the mirror and a trifling locket that had been buried, most of the time, out in the garden! Duncan shook his head, ate a piece of toast and thought how his wife would blubber over that story when he told it to her.

"If your grandmother's name was Annette Ramirez, your mother's maiden name must have been Lolita Ramirez?" Kingdon suggested gently.

"No! Please, not that name. I am not sure, señor. I am ver' little then. And that name is ver' much of the lie. It was the name of the sister of Marsallow. She was the actress and she have the name Lolita Ramirez for the stage. Always she was Lolita Ramirez, and she was the bad woman—like him. Ver' bad to me, señor. The memory of her is not good. She smile ver' beautiful, señor, but when she smile mos' beautiful then it was that I hide away from the whip."

She paused, looked at Kingdon hopefully and smiled with an effort that was the height of real courage in view of what came after.

"She was the bad woman," she repeated in a low voice. "She tell me many times I am nobody—that I have not the mother or the father; and then she say it will be ver' nice for me when I am big if she is my mother and the MacBeth from Africa is my father. She say this many times to me also. Marsallow he say it many times too, and I am ver' little then and I do not know how I can have the mother that is in the locket if the sister of Marsallow is to be my mother when I am big.

"This was ver' difficult for me. It make me ver' unhappy when I am so little. And then the sister of Marsallow die, and he tell me my mother is dead. I know she is not my mother, because my mother is in the locket in my garden, but he say many times to me my mother is dead. He say she was Lolita Ramirez and he is her brother, and he say my father, the MacBeth from Africa, is dead too.

"I am ver' little then. I do not understand. But I know my mother is in the locket. That is the true thing. And when I am older with the years, and Marsallow keep me alone with the so ugly teacher, he tell me many, many times, over and over, that his sister was my mother and that my father was the MacBeth from Africa. But I always know it is lies, because my mother is in the locket, but I do not know, until I am eighteen years, why it is the lie.

"It is money, señor. It is ver' much money. And he say I am the Annette MacBeth and that he is my uncle because he want this ver' much money for himself. That I know now. He has ver' many paper to show in the court in London, and the court say I am the Annette MacBeth and that he is my uncle and that the ver' much money is for me. But it is the lie, señor. You know it is the lie. You have seen my mother in the locket—my mother and my grandmother, señor. And you look me in the face. Surely you know it is the lie."

The girl's eagerness to be truthful bordered on feverishness. She was so desperately anxious to rid herself of Marsallow and of all association with the name of Ramirez, as represented by the woman who had made her early childhood so unhappy, that the basis for the lie either escaped her altogether, or she simply refused, in her own mind, to concede that

Marsallow could be even halfway truthful about anything.

"It is only partly a lie, Annette," Kingdon said quietly and carefully. "Your mother was not Marsallow's sister and Marsallow is not related to you in any way. You can set your mind at rest on that score. But your father *was* the MacBeth from Africa—from this very place, in fact—and your mother was the real Lolita Ramirez."

He paused and noted that the girl was obviously trying to believe him simply to be polite.

"Don't you see what happened?" Kingdon asked gently. "Have you never thought that the Marsallows lied to you about your parentage so that you would think as you grew older that they were doing you a favor in adopting you, as it were, and providing you with a fortune? Also, the trick of implanting in your mind the idea that the man who was really your father was just a kind of beneficent substitute, was very clever. But I don't suppose you have ever given that angle of the lie a thought?"

ANNETTE shook her head. "No, señor. I have not think of it that way. Always Marsallow tell me how good it is for me that I am not the nobody now, but that he make me the Annette MacBeth, and that he is taking the so great care of my money for me till—till I have marry the MacBeth who is my cousin."

As Kingdon's eyebrows lifted sharply, Annette's expression became quite decided.

"But I have not the intention, señor, to marry the cousin. I have not the intention to marry at all. No. Not at all."

Duncan laughed.

"You'll get over that. Wait awhile."

"No, Señor Captain. I am eighteen years. The lie is gone. Marsallow is gone. I am free. And to marry is not like that."

Duncan gestured complete disapproval and buttered another piece of toast. Kingdon said quietly—

"Then you never really have thought that Lolita Ramirez, the actress, was just a very convenient substitute for the Lolita Ramirez who was your mother?"

"No, señor—" rather weakly and staring somewhat fearfully at a new dawn.

"Don't you see that that coincidence in names explains the whole miserable business, and probably provided Marsallow and his sister with their original inspiration?"

Annette stared a little more, her mouth slightly open, the struggle to believe this greater truth written in every line of her face.

"Your father *was* the MacBeth from Africa," Kingdon persisted slowly, "and your mother *was* Lolita Ramirez—but not Lolita Ramirez, the actress, who was Marsallow's sister. Don't you see what happened now?"

Before Annette could find her voice to say anything at all, Duncan came out of his lethargy quite suddenly, and growled at Kingdon:

"You mean that big swine put a thing like that over on this poor girl? And he came aboard my ship—"

"Calm down, Jim, and tell Annette that you knew her father. You did know him pretty well, didn't you?"

"Ned MacBeth? Of course I knew him. Won his money and drank his liquor lots of time, and though I never chanced to meet his wife, he took at least two trips with me on the old *Siluko* when I had her on the mail run." He faced Annette abruptly. "And both of these times he was going to see you in Las Palmas. Everybody who knew anything about him knew he had a little baby girl in Las Palmas, and if he gave you that locket, you can bet a million you're that baby!"

Annette's eyes were wider now than they were ever likely to be again.

"His daughter," Kingdon amended quietly, and was totally unaware of the raucous, boiling mid-morning world beyond the portholes.

"My father—that is the true thing, too?"

Kingdon nodded and smiled.

"Of course. And your mother in the locket was the real Lolita Ramirez—his wife."

Annette seemed to be looking curiously at this truth almost as if it were quite separate and distinct from the fact that preceded it.

"His wife—" whisperingly. "My mother . . . Me—I *am* the Annette MacBeth! And it is Marsallow who is the nobody!"

"He's all kinds of a swine, Kingdon," Duncan said, as Annette came suddenly to her feet. "And something's got to be done about him. We're not going to sit here and—"

"He is the nobody," Annette broke in tensely, and as she slipped her hand, containing the locket, inside her blouse, her arm suddenly stiffened and the fires that leaped into her deep black eyes glowed like a yellow flame. "He is the pig and he have dared to lie to me, to whip me like the dog and keep me alone with no one all these many years! My father—he is dead. My mother—she is dead. But Marsallow, señors, he is alive! Today he is alive! Tomorrow—" her hand leaped from her blouse and the blade she held in her long and slender fingers quivered with the savage intensity of her grip upon its point— "tomorrow, señors . . ."

And almost before their eyes could focus, the glittering steel was on its way and had lifted an apple from atop the pile of fruit on the sideboard. Duncan shivered, and Kingdon looked seriously, first at the knife, and then at Annette. Her eyes were aflame, but the line of her mouth and the set of her lithe young body were straight and cold as the blade in the apple.

"Good Lord, girl!" Duncan breathed hoarsely. "Where did you learn that kind of William Tell trick? Don't you know you mustn't throw knives at people? Ugh!"

Annette did not seem to hear him. She was looking steadily at Kingdon, waiting for his verdict.

"That's one result of your loneliness, isn't it?" he asked quietly. "You couldn't learn to shoot, I imagine, without letting everybody know about it, but you could learn to throw a knife." Again he glanced at the spitted apple, where it lay on the floor. He smiled. "You seem to have learned the trick of it very well. Perhaps you will teach it to me some time?"

The flame in her eyes died down slowly and the tension in muscle and nerve relaxed.

"How do you know I have learn this when I am alone?" she asked in a low voice. "How do you know I have the fear to make the noise with the pistol? How do you understand so much of me—like that?"

"Perhaps it is the kind of thing I'd be likely to do myself if I were alone as you have been. Particularly with Marsallow on my mind." He smiled, but shook his head at the same time. "But it can't be done, Annette. Neither your father nor your mother would like it."

"No?" Her voice was rather hesitant and weak.

"No. I'll confess it is a useful trick to know in an emergency, but Marsallow isn't an emergency now. He's a necessity. As the melodramas say, Annette, he has the papers, and we need them and have to have them." He glanced at the cold breakfast sadly. "Better order another."

But Annette shook her head.

"No, señor, I am too excite. I—you will please to pardon, but I think it will be bes' for me in my cabin."

Kingdon rose.

"And you will leave the knife to me?"

Annette did not say.

"You will come to see me again?"

"Quite soon."

"Thank you, señor. You have make me ver' happy. But I—" she laughed that same broken little laugh— "I have never the wish to be alone before, but now—" the smile held though her eyes suddenly glistened and filled— "I am his daughter now and I have not the fear at all."

She smiled to Duncan, touched Kingdon's sleeve ever so slightly with the tips of her fingers in passing, then turned ab-

ruptly and hurried out. She passed the knife without looking at it and Kingdon felt a sense of relief. Suddenly she wheeled, plucked it from its target and was gone on a breakneck run for her cabin.

Then Kingdon looked toward the skipper and found the skipper looking toward him.

"I'm glad I'm a friend of hers," Duncan said dryly.

"So am I," Kingdon agreed, without meaning the same thing at all.

CHAPTER XII

BY APPOINTMENT AT FOUR

THE DISTRICT commissioner at Warri was a mild appearing soul who had a well established preference for straight whisky, piebald ponies and a kind of self-winding conception of justice. He rode the ponies when at home on leave, administered the justice when on duty in Warri and drank the whisky anywhere, anytime. His name was Bridges.

He seemed just naturally to understand ways that were strange and which were supposed to belong only to Chinese, and to any one who cared to listen he was frank enough to explain that he was a damned good district commissioner because he had had Jupiter rising in Libra with the Sun in Sagittarius. This meant, he said, that you had a generous and expansive and philosophical sense of justice —the kind that allowed people who needed hanging to hang themselves, so that all you had to do was to cut them down.

When he had listened to Kingdon and Randolph and Captain Duncan in his office for rather more than an hour, he said:

"Gentlemen, it is a good story. But I am not an editor. I'm a district commissioner. Marsallow, unfortunately, has the papers, plus the august authority of the court at home behind him. All you have is a locket and a pretty girl to match." He smiled and glanced toward Randolph. "Your evidence, young man, isn't worth anything at all, because it isn't corroborated by a single scrap of authenticated testimony, and the girl's story is of no earthly use out here. She'll have to tell it to the chancery court."

Kingdon nodded thoughtfully and Duncan grunted, while Randolph's childlike blue eyes became colder and colder, and his peach blossom complexion paled a bit to correspond with the icy glint in his eyes.

"And what about me and my officers and the girl being banged around as if we were punching bags?" Duncan demanded. "And on my own ship, too!"

"Do you usually allow Marsallow's sort to come aboard your ship and knock you and your officers about without taking some kind of defensive action?"

"Like hell I do! But Kingdon here said—"

"Then it's perfectly all right," Bridges interrupted quietly, and glanced through the open door of his office at a cluster of natives who were arguing with an orderly. "You'd better not do it; not unless he tries the trick a second time." He smiled benignly, as only a rising Jupiter can smile. "I hardly think you need legal advice in a case of the kind, and I am not here to give legal advice anyway. I'm here to pay out rope to the fellows who have a hankering for a bit of hemp around their necks. You needn't take that literally, but if the idea is worth anything to you make the most of it."

"But suppose he swears out a warrant?" Duncan persisted.

"For the girl? Nonsense, Duncan. I have never met this Spanish giant, but I am perfectly certain he is not a fool. He knows, before he begins action along those lines, that he would not get the warrant in any case." Bridges became very judicial. "This court, Duncan, frowns upon coercion in any form. The girl is of age. She has seen the country and she doesn't like it. She's going home. Nobody will blame her for that. We'd all go with her if we could and leave Marsallow alone with the papers."

Even Randolph laughed, and Bridges added:

"Incidentally, thus far, the papers are all he has, and they do not belong to him but to the girl. And until he makes the contract or agreement he has with the girl ironclad in a court of the colony, his authority is subject to change without very much notice. You know that, Kingdon, don't you?"

"Yes—I'd thought of it," Kingdon said rather absently.

"Then why come to me?"

"To get your views on the subject of coercion," Kingdon said and smiled because he was thinking of something else. "And to announce that the *Ganna-Ganna* brought a few cases of a very old brand in a new bottle. If you have nothing better to do this afternoon, I'd like you come along and tell me what your mess is likely to think of it."

Bridges said the bottle would not interest him at any time, but the brand probably would around four o'clock.

SO THEY left him and trooped back to Marsden's beach in the broiling noonday heat, and found Lori Egba keeping Harth company in the dining saloon. This was a privilege accorded almost to Lori Egba alone, and if the chief of Egba-town could be said to have the slightest sense of prideful conceit in him, this privilege was at the root of it.

Harth had been advised of Randolph's true identity and it had not surprised him in the least. It was necessary for Randolph to be some one or something extraordinary. To have been knocked cold by a MacBeth was distinction by extinction, and this satisfied Harth's sense of the fitness of things as far as he was concerned.

"You send boy for me to come look you," Lori said to Kingdon when the latter was ready to take his place at the head of the table.

Kingdon nodded. He had sent a boy to Egba-town that morning, and though the matter of the vanished locket had been cleared up, there was yet another direction in which Lori could make himself very useful.

"You catch plenty oil for market?" Kingdon asked.

"Li'l bit," Lori said modestly, which meant probably fifty or more puncheons from various of the native markets in which he was the Rockefeller of the oil that grew almost as high in the air as the other kind was sunk in the ground. "My boys bring ten puncheon foh you beach. They live foh breakwater."

"I know. I saw them come alongside." Kingdon looked quietly and understandingly at the chief. "But I think your price too big. *Savez?* So you go take them foh African Merchants. Pass four o'clock li'l bit."

Lori's very expressive eyes smiled just a little.

"Be all ri'. Pass four o'clock my boy take um. Dat be all foh dat?

"You headman go make African Merchants big price. Ten-piece pass river price. *Savez?* You go say plenty more oil come from market—fifty, hundred puncheon—plenty. *Savez?*"

"Yessah. My headman *savez* lie palaver too much."

Kingdon smiled.

"All right. Pass four o'clock li'l bit."

Then Kingdon gave his whole attention to a serving of canned lobster while Duncan and Harth exchanged significant glances. However, Randolph, son of the house of MacBeth, kept his childlike blue eyes fixed on the little man who was planning to play tricks on his business.

"Pardon me, sir. But might I ask what object you have in mind?"

Kingdon looked up.

"Surely. They are paying too much for oil over there—a higher price than the traders' agreement on this river allows. They're juggling figures, too—not declaring the actual number of puncheons they buy from month to month as the rest of us have to do. You know the arrangement, don't you?"

Randolph nodded.

"Yes. I understand that each beach has a quota according to its normal ca-

pacity for doing business, and any beach that overbuys its quota has to distribute the surplus." He smiled. "I should know that much. I have to distribute a surplus of kernels every month."

Kingdon bowed.

"That's a carefully worded compliment Randolph, even if it isn't strictly true. But the idea involved is to prevent cutthroat competition, and quotas are increased or decreased at intervals to avoid any possibility of unfair restraint upon legitimate enterprise." He smiled wryly. "I'll confess the temptation to cheat is worse than prickly heat when you happen to be up to your quota and your breakwater is lined with canoes."

Randolph, however, did not smile. If the African Merchants' Company was cheating . . . The cold glint in his childlike blue eyes became colder and colder.

"I understand your point of view, sir," he said very quietly. "But I can not approve of your method. You must remember that I am—"

"Certainly. And you're going to be there to stop the purchase of the oil at the illegal price, and also, if necessary, take a look at the internals of that branch boat. You and the girl. You are going to take possession shortly after four o'clock this afternoon."

Randolph's eyes leaped with anticipation. He began upon his lobster with a spoon.

"Is there any one in your Liverpool office you can trust to carry out an order?" Kingdon persisted.

"Grant, the treasurer of the company," Randolph said at once. "He was one of my father's best friends, and I'm sure he'd do anything I say even if it couldn't be done."

Kingdon nodded and finished his lobster to relieve the anxiety of a hovering house boy.

"You're going to send a cable telling Grant to assume full charge," Kingdon said presently. "And to discharge anybody he doesn't think it advisable to keep. We'll code the message and make everything perfectly clear. Understand?"

"Yes, sir." Randolph nodded.

"Then we'll arrange to go across the creek and get the custody of Marsallow's bag of papers. As Bridges wisely said, they belong to Annette and she should have them. Is that all clear?"

Randolph smiled very earnestly now and helped himself to some deviled chicken without knowing what it was.

"Just about how much will Marsallow lose?" Kingdon asked thoughtfully, while everybody stared at his colossal assurance. "Have you any idea?"

"Perhaps half a million pounds."

Kingdon nodded solemnly.

"That's a lot of money for any man to lose. To say nothing of your share. He had some sort of notion of marrying the girl to you but—" he glanced at Harth—"I hardly think he meant it. Those sneakthieves who visited you last night—I don't think they wanted to steal anything. When Marsallow makes up his mind to a million he doesn't share it with any one."

"Hunh," Harth grunted. "Nice friendly sort of business associates to have. And I suppose because Balloch is sick, I'll have to stick around here this afternoon and just exercise my imagination."

"That will probably be much more exciting than the real thing," Kingdon said. "How much money have we in the safe?"

"About a hundred pounds—duty money mostly."

"Fine. Fifty will be ample. All silver. It may be a gesture we won't need, but—" with a reminiscent twinkle in his eyes as he looked at Duncan—"it worked this morning for a little while, on a very small scale and may work again in a pinch." He looked toward Lori Egba. "Pass four o'clock li'l bit. You 'membah?"

"I 'membah. Be all ri'." Lori shook his head hopelessly. "You *savez* fix palaver too much."

Kingdon hoped he did this time. Fixing half a million pounds so it would be out of reach of Marsallow's huge and prehensile hands would be quite a trick. Particularly with Marsallow, to all intents and purposes, sitting on the fortune.

MARSDEN'S company launch carried Kingdon and Duncan back to the *Ganna-Ganna* with some wearing apparel for a lady.

When the launch returned to Marsden's beach shortly before three o'clock, Annette was wearing the sun helmet Kingdon had brought her, but most of the rest of the things were being returned without much ceremony or comment. Dressed as she had been the previous evening, she carried the Japanese kimono over her arm to serve any occasion of state that might arise.

"Do you think I am the so fat one and have the feet like the man?" was about all she had said with reference to Kingdon's judgment as a ladies' outfitter, but it was considered enough and she was conceded the privilege of making her own selection.

When Kingdon had quietly explained to her what was expected of her "shortly after four o'clock", the look of exultant expectation that leaped into her eyes was almost savage, and her right hand slipped involuntarily inside her blouse with an eagerness that was not quite polite. Kingdon just shook his head.

"That won't do. Young ladies do not—"

"Carry the knife?"

"No." Kingdon smiled.

"It is not" she said very seriously, "that I have the fear. But the knife is always to me the—the insurance with Marsallow."

Kingdon nodded gravely.

"I can readily understand that. Does he know you carry one?"

"No, señor. That is why it is the insurance."

Kingdon appeared to consider the matter even though he knew in advance the decision he would have to make.

"All right. But you will make me a present of it this evening, and promise me never to carry one again. Will you promise that?"

As the launch slipped alongside Marsden's gig wharf, he caught her arm to steady her as the launch lurched a little.

"Why do you want the knife from me?" she asked, and her voice was much softer and lingered much longer than was necessary. "You—my so ver' good friend—want to remember me with the knife. That is not the good luck, señor. The edge of the knife will cut the friendship."

Kingdon laughed and turned to go up on deck where Duncan was smoking and waiting.

"I'll give you a bicuba for it."

"A what, señor?" holding him back.

"A bicuba. That is the native name for a three-penny bit."

Annette nodded. The expression that went with the nod was very old and very dry.

"Thank you, señor," she said simply. "The three-penny bit will be very nice to me. But it have not the tongue. It will not tell me why you have keep my knife."

Kingdon did not tell her either. She was much too young and he, like Harth, was getting old; and even if he did not have a temperamental stomach, he was a West African trader and— Well, what was the use?

CHAPTER XIII

FINESSE

BRIDGES, the district commissioner, came along to Marsden's shortly before four o'clock. He liked the food Kingdon usually served at that mellow and hallowed hour, Kingdon's liquor was always plentiful and Kingdon's conversation was that of a kindred soul who had a decent respect for the doctrine that nothing happens by chance.

Certainly Annette's presence as hostess extraordinary was not a chance happening, and Kingdon's absence on unexpected business was not an accident either. There being no reason why Captain Duncan should be on Kingdon's veranda at that specific time, his failure to appear needed no explanation whatever. And of course, Harth and Randolph were at work as usual and Balloch was sick in bed.

So that Annette happened to be alone when Bridges arrived and when she had introduced herself very prettily, apologized so regretfully for Kingdon's absence, and had served tea and food and had seen to it that the new bottle with the old brand was placed conveniently at Bridges' elbow, Bridges finally said in his most benign, Jupiterian manner:

"Well, well! Ned MacBeth's daughter! Good Lord, how time does fly!"

Then he went on to narrate a great many things that had happened while time had been in the process of flying. Annette listened and allowed him to look at her very intently every now and then in the quizzical way he had after the second drink.

It was while he was looking at her like this that Randolph intruded and apologetically explained:

"I am sorry, sir, but I'll have to deprive you of your hostess. You see, we have decided that the best thing to do is to take possession of our property in person and—er—that is, invite Señor Marsallow and the new agent over there, to leave at once. And—well, I have finished my work here for the day and I'd like to get it over with while it is still light."

Bridges eyed Randolph up and down speculatively.

"You don't look like a young man who would needlessly expose this young lady to any danger or unpleasantness," he decided finally. "Is this your idea—to be carried out in Kingdon's absence or—where is Kingdon anyway? He doesn't usually make appointments and not keep them."

Randolph's expression was most humble.

"I am really very sorry. Mr. Kingdon was called downriver unexpectedly and—" Randolph smiled politely to Annette—"he thought meeting my cousin, Miss MacBeth, would compensate you for his unavoidable absence."

Bridges acknowledged that Miss MacBeth had paid the compensation with unparalleled generosity. Miss MacBeth was charming—she was delightful—but, good Lord, she was only a child! And did he, Randolph, think he was going to be permitted to try to intimidate the Marsallow giant simply by taking the girl along with him?

"If Marsallow is the man you have all painted him," Bridges concluded, "he'll just laugh at you and tell you to go to the devil. Also, he may grab this charming young lady and find some plausible excuse for preventing her return to the *Ganna-Ganna*. Hadn't you thought of that?"

"Well, you see, sir, something quite desperate must be done and—"

"I admire your spirit, young man. But your discretion needs a lawyer." Bridges paused, finished his drink, possessed himself of a sandwich and rose. "It so happens that I am a lawyer. I have to be. Of course, my interest will be purely impersonal, and I shall go along incog as it were, but I'd like to see what sort of job you two infants make of chucking Marsallow out."

Randolph was very appreciative—principally of Kingdon's sagacity—and Annette, with precisely the same thought in mind, told Bridges he was the very true gentleman. This pleased Bridges and, being Jupiterian, he liked to be pleased; and being the district commissioner, whether he was traveling incog or not, the fact that he was so very well pleased was likely to be very useful.

Harth, from the concealment of Balloch's room, watched Bridges, who was munching a sandwich, lead the way downstairs.

"Size means nothing," he said to Balloch, who was comfortably dozing, "not when you have a little Napoleon on the job."

Then because at least one white man who was perfectly well had to remain on the beach at all times, Harth's expression became sour and he went out on to the veranda, gazed across the little side creek and prepared to exercise his imagination.

THE African Merchants' beach, at that late hour of the afternoon, was by no means crowded. Though there were still a number of hangers-on idling in the shadow of the kernel store awning and several groups of small bushel traders going through the customary ritual of haggling over the cloth and salt and rice and gin that constituted the greater part of the pay they had received for the produce they had sold to the white trader, the beach was comparatively quiet.

The oil canoes, laden with Lori Egba's ten puncheons of oil, were the only oil canoes alongside the mangrove stick breakwater, and Lori's canoe boys lolled around the oil wharf with a sublime disinterest in the part they were playing in a drama of fettered lives.

Marsallow was waiting for night. His strategy was always the unexpected. Consequently he was all the more likely to be surprised when the unexpected happened to him.

The ten puncheons of oil were dickered for by Charnton, the African Merchants' agent, who was a lean, sallow faced individual and who never, by any chance, looked at the man to whom he happened to be talking.

While he bargained in his office with Lori Egba's headman, Scurvy Murvey lolled on the veranda and drank himself out of a state of surly but tactful reticence, into a less careful and frankly critical humor.

Marsallow also was on the veranda, but he did not drink; not with at least half a million pounds on his mind.

His eyes, always shaded by the sloppy panama, were fixed most of the time on the *Ganna-Ganna*, and he appeared to be paying not the slightest attention to Murvey who was trying to tell him, for his own good, of course, that if he had not been so ruddy tight with his money and had chartered a ship that was a ship, that lousy little wasp, Kingdon, wouldn't have had any occasion to come aboard and he, Marsallow, would not have brought upon himself all this fuss about the girl.

"When you plan to steer a course," Murvey said specifically, "don't get aboard a merry-go-round. No man ever saved a brass farthing by chartering that kind of a tub."

If Marsallow were listening or deriving any benefit from Murvey's conversation, he certainly gave no indication of the fact; not until Charnton came out of his office and announced that there were ten more puncheons to go into the branch boat.

Marsallow turned his head, glanced at Charnton as if he were a kind of troublesome fly, then shifted his head a little to include Murvey.

"You have drink too much, Señor Captain," he said mildly. "And you have too many words to say. Perhaps you have too much breath that you are waste it like that?"

His great right hand seemed to leap, independently of his whole body, as he grabbed a fistful of Murvey's shirt front and heaved him out of his chair.

"What the—"

Murvey's tongue escaped Murvey's chattering teeth by a hairbreadth as Marsallow shook him till he rattled. Then the Spaniard dropped him back into the chair as one might drop a dust rag after it had been shaken out.

"Too much breath, Señor Captain, is not good," he said, and his voice was very mild now. "So I have shake some away." Then blandly to Charnton who did not look at all happy, "Ten puncheon, señor? And the price?"

Charnton told him and hurriedly explained that he had the promise of many more puncheons from the same trader.

"The promise, señor?" Marsallow queried gently. "Do you pay for the promise? The promise of the so black swine?" Marsallow rested his hand on Charnton's shoulder as he spoke, almost in a fatherly way. "You pay with my money for the promise of the puncheon you do not see? That is not the good way. Always, Señor Charnton, my money pays for what is here to see. Never for the puncheon that is hide in the bush."

There were beads of sweat on Charnton's forehead and his eyes screeched with the sudden pain of Marsallow's bone crushing grip.

"Da—damn you!" he managed to articulate and his voice lifted sharply in a hoarse scream. "Let go!"

Marsallow let go. The gesture was more a flip than a push and it was most adroitly executed. Charnton whirled like a top and, clutching at his shoulder as if he were trying to pluck the hot fire out of it, spun into Murvey's lap.

"Too much breath," Marsallow said again to Murvey as Charnton landed in the skipper's midsection. "Perhaps the Señor Charnton have shake some more away."

He did not wait to hear what either of them thought of his humor or his manner of expressing it, but as he strode away he did slip his hand inside his shirt with a hopeful look in his eyes, as if he had a hankering for an excuse to get into some kind of really purposeful action.

HE KNEW exactly where he stood, and just how shaky was his foothold, and the glances he shot in the direction of the *Ganna-Ganna* were decidedly of the desperate sort. His thoughts were those of a man who had climbed the sheer face of a cliff to within reach of the top only to have a trifling sliver of rock threaten suddenly to hurtle him to destruction.

Therefore, as he loped downstairs to the beach he gave every impression that the children of the Unusual MacBeths had chosen just the wrong moment to throw him out.

Perhaps this was why, as he reached the bottom step of the stairs, he stopped short and his eyes popped wide with unbelief as the girl who meant so much to his plans came leisurely around the corner of the house.

He had not seen her arrive because she had come by way of the little side creek that separated the two beaches instead of, more officially, by landing at the gig wharf in full view of the veranda.

For a gasping instant or two as she came a few steps toward him, quietly and steadily as if she were walking down the aisle of a church, Marsallow had every reason to believe that she was alone. Then, and with equally distressing suddenness, he knew she was not. Randolph, with his customary abruptness, appeared a second or so later, and immediately behind Randolph was a man Marsallow had never seen before.

Ere the Spaniard had time to utter the simplest sort of exclamation, Randolph asked abruptly:

"Where is the agent—Charnton? I'd like to talk to him."

Marsallow eyed Randolph with a mildly speculative eye. He knew Randolph and he knew what the combined forces of Randolph and Annette meant to him. So he ignored Randolph's query altogether and said to Annette in English, so that he would not be misunderstood by any one—

"I am delight, Annette, that you are return." He moved toward her, his hand outstretched in welcome. "Always you have the good sense before it is ver' late."

But between Marsallow's outstretched hand and Annette Randolph calmly interposed himself and asked shortly:

"Where is Charnton? The agent? Don't you understand English?"

Marsallow gave no sign of action that Bridges could see and his devastating right hand moved so quickly to cuff Randolph out of the way that Bridges realized what had happened only when Marsallow's hand swept right on because Randolph's head was not there to stop it.

Undoubtedly Marsallow was again surprised. He was also somewhat off balance and Randolph's trip-hammer upper cut climbed in under the Spaniard's forward thrusting chin so fast that Bridges scarcely saw it at all. But he did see the right that followed; saw it and felt weak and hopelessly old. All of Randolph's shoulders, skill, youth and enthusiasm were in it, and it gave the appearance of sinking into Marsallow's solar plexus up to the elbow.

The huge bulk of the Spaniard buckled,

swayed and half turned about, a groping arm outstretched to wrap itself about one of the ironwood posts that supported the veranda. His face was gray, and the blue-green circles under his eyes seemed to turn black; and as he found the post and wrapped his arm around it, it was apparent for the moment at least, that Randolph's right had found its mark with deadly and paralyzing precision.

An instant later, Randolph was possessed of Marsallow's gun and was standing a few careful paces away waiting for the Spaniard to survive or drop.

Annette, with an almost comical look of incredulity on her face, huddled nearer to Bridges, who put a fatherly arm about her shoulders, at the same time eyeing Randolph with a new and wholesome respect. On the face of it the thing was incredible. It was too easy. Much. Randolph was either very lucky or decidedly the master boxer with a punch, or else Marsallow was greatly overrated. And though Harth could have told Bridges a thing or two about Randolph as a boxer, Bridges would still have had the sensations of a man who had traveled many miles and had paid prohibitive dollars to see a fight that ended in a knockout in the first half-minute.

Annette, however, who knew nothing of fights of the sort, knew better than this. She did not rightly know what miracle had taken place before her eyes, but she did know that Marsallow was not yet dead; that he was alive and still on his feet. Therefore there was no security for his enemy.

"Better let me have that gun," Bridges said to Randolph quietly. "And keep out of trouble."

"Yes, sir," Randolph said simply, turning the gun over to Bridges, watching Marsallow the while and paying no heed at all to the native spectators who hung gapingly, like a ragged fringe, around the startling proceedings.

"What in hell's goin' on here?" a raucous voice demanded over the veranda rail above. "Hello, girlie. Got back have you? Who—"

The voice trailed off as Murvey became aware of the identity of Annette's nearest escort, and he gaped down at Bridges with a ludicrous expression of futility upon his bloated, unshaven face.

Charnton's sallow countenance and shifty restless eyes appeared at Murvey's shoulder, and two of his white assistants showed inquiring faces at the stair head a moment or two later. Before Charnton could say anything, Randolph ordered sharply:

"Come down here. I want to talk to you."

"But I see no reason why I—"

"Come down! If I have to come up and get you, you'll regret it."

CHARNTON came down. He was in no hurry about it, however, more particularly when he saw Marsallow hugging the ironwood post and saw Marsallow's ponderous gun in Bridges' hand. He paused a few steps from the bottom of the stairs.

"What on earth's happened? Why is he—"

"You know who I am, don't you?" Randolph demanded. "And this young lady?"

"Why—I—yes, I believe I do."

"Very well. It has just been brought to our attention that you are buying oil and other produce at prices prohibited by the trading agreement on this river. Isn't that the case?"

Charnton glanced involuntarily toward the breakwater and the conspicuous ten puncheons of oil, then toward Marsallow and tried to moisten his dry lips with a dryer tongue. Finally he looked up at the veranda and found that Murvey was no longer there.

"Well—I—you see, Mr. MacBeth, I—that is—I have simply obeyed orders."

"Whose orders?"

Again Charnton glanced toward Marsallow, who seemed to be in a very bad way, and apparently incapable of doing anything at the moment except clutch the ironwood post and stay on his feet. This, of course, was almost as miracu-

lous a situation to Charnton as it was to Annette, and neither was aware that the most miraculous thing about it was that Marsallow was on his feet at all. The giant Spaniard was numb and well nigh paralyzed from head to heel, but the tiny spark of consciousness that was left to him was even then lighting the way to revenge.

"Whose orders?" Randolph snapped at Charnton again.

Charnton still hesitated. Then perhaps because he remembered and still felt the pain of Marsallow's crushing grip upon his shoulder, he said in a very low voice—

"Señor Marsallow."

"What's the branch boat for?"

"Er—that—I'm afraid that is Señor Marsallow's affair also."

"Answer my question!" Randolph barked and his childlike blue eyes were no longer in the least childlike.

"For the surplus oil and kernels," Charnton said meekly.

"To be transshipped at Forcados?" Randolph suggested as Kingdon had privately coached him to do.

"Er—yes, I suppose so. I—that is—I am not—er—altogether with Señor Marsallow's plans."

Randolph glanced at Marsallow and, at the same time, wondered why Kingdon and Duncan did not show up. Then, still watching the Spaniard out of the corner of his eye, he said definitely:

"My cousin, Miss MacBeth, and I have decided to assume complete charge of this station. We have notified the home office to that effect. You will vacate the premises immediately and Señor Marsallow will go with you. He has no further authority to act either for my cousin or myself. Is that perfectly clear?"

Charnton gaped. He looked at Annette in a stunned sort of bewilderment, then at Bridges and finally at Marsallow, who was still apparently of no earthly use to himself or any one.

"Why—I—this is utterly without—"

"Shut up and get out. One time. And take him—" indicating Marsallow—"and the branch boat with you. Understand?"

Obviously Charnton did not want to take Marsallow with him or anything that was Marsallow's. Plainly, too, Charnton was mortally afraid of being associated with Marsallow now in any way.

Suddenly the Spaniard's knees sagged and he slid sharply down the post as if he were going to collapse altogether. But he managed to hang on and pull himself up a little; and Annette, who was watching him very carefully all the while, drew back a pace. She knew Marsallow. He was always most alive when he seemed most dead; always most dangerous when he was most polite; always most treacherous when the things he did seemed most helpful and friendly.

"It's all right," Bridges assured her, but agreed to step back as many paces as she thought advisable.

Randolph looked toward Charnton.

"See what you and your assistants can do for him. He's your palaver, you know. Better get your beach boys to carry him on to the branch boat."

Charnton looked sick, green; and his glance traveled to the stair head in almost feverish haste.

"Get some boys," he said hoarsely to the beach clerk who happened to be one of the two assistants on the stairs. "And you, Nelson—" he added nervously to his shop clerk and senior assistant—"come down and see what you can do. You know something of first aid."

When Nelson came down he brought a bottle of brandy and a glass, also a Kroo house boy to help hold the bottle. Nelson was no great size, but he was sturdy, capable and not easily flustered. If he approached the task in hand with an appearance of nervousness, it was principally on Annette's account. When he was actually trying to get Marsallow to swallow the brandy his hand was steady enough, and if some of the liquor slopped down Marsallow's chin this was the Spaniard's fault. He seemed to have but one idea in mind—to stay on his feet—and he did not appear to be conscious enough to realize that the brandy would help.

Nevertheless, most of it found its way down his bull throat and after a little while the first sign of life betrayed itself in a pawing, groping movement of his right hand; a slow movement at first, without any very definite objective. Then the hand encountered the Kroo boy to whom Nelson had handed the brandy bottle, and when the Kroo boy naturally backed away, Marsallow's fingers closed sharply upon his arm.

The whites of the Kroo boy's eyes showed suddenly and Nelson leaped backward and to one side as Marsallow came startlingly to life, spinning the Kroo boy like a human top straight at Bridges, the gun and Annette.

Marsallow followed the Kroo boy.

Randolph, hatless, and like a golden streak of light, followed Marsallow.

And a heavy rain of silver from the general direction of heaven poured down upon Marsallow's head and shoulders and pattered to the concrete path with a sound like tinkling thunder.

CHAPTER XIV

A SPANISH KISS

MARSALLOW stopped short. Every one and everything did except the spinning Kroo boy who had no choice in the matter. Even Randolph, who knew about Kingdon's bag of florins, was completely taken by surprise. Bridges, managing to escape the catapulting Kroo boy by a hairbreadth, almost forgot he had a gun and a lady to care for and, with Annette and every one else, gaped up ludicrously at the veranda.

Marsallow, however, was the most interested and most interesting student of the silver rain that had fallen mostly upon him. He looked up into Kingdon's very quiet eyes and up into the mouth of the tip-tilted sack of florins that now rested on the veranda rail and it was doubtful if he saw Captain Duncan at all.

The florins trickled from the sack now, two and three at a time, trickled lazily and dropped to the concrete path at Marsallow's feet to roll hither and yon, and the ragged fringe of native onlookers began a sudden forward movement that was both inquiring and hopeful.

"The fifty golden sovereigns you did not win, señor," Kingdon said softly but distinctly and became deliberately symbolical and metaphorical. "They are now turned to silver. In a very little while they will be as nothing—scattered on the wings of greed. Look!"

Kingdon waved in the direction of the encircling natives whose numbers seemed to have increased with the same mysterious suddenness peculiar to sea gulls. Lori Egba's canoe boys no longer lolled on the oil wharf; Kroo beach boys, with a hungry look in their eyes, multiplied from the four corners of the beach; the branch boats' decks and the breakwater were more deserted than on a Sunday afternoon.

Marsallow saw all this and there was a queer, dumbfounded look upon his face; a look that was an odd mixture of fascination and of hunted fear. Again he was face to face with a force he did not in the least understand, and as he glanced quickly about him, his right hand stole inside his shirt in nervous desperation.

At once, almost the moment his head was turned, the rain of silver increased to its original thunderous proportions and the pattering rush of naked native feet answered the thunderous tinkle of coins as Duncan gestured to the surrounding blacks to help themselves.

The giant Spaniard heard and saw both the sudden rain of florins and the equally sudden rush of the blacks that converged hungrily to meet it. He found also that, where the spoils were richest, he was quite alone.

Bridges, taking Annette with him and covering Marsallow carefully with the gun, had backed away step by step to a distance that he thought was safe from the effect of any sudden rush the Spaniard might make. Annette was watching Marsallow's right hand to the exclusion of everything else.

Randolph, in obedience to a sharp signal from Kingdon, had also backed away until, with Charnton, Nelson and the beach clerk, he stood on the lower step of the stairs. Duncan, although not even Kingdon knew this, was leaning sidewise on the veranda rail, with a revolver muzzle thrusting its purposeful way between his arm and side, and he did not think he could miss anything as big as Marsallow at that range.

The Spaniard, however, in those few seconds, was not thinking of Duncan, or of Bridges or Randolph or Annette or of guns. He knew about those and how to handle them. Even the rush of the natives was just a confusion to him—a form of confusion that he knew how to use to his own advantage when the time came. So he was not thinking about that either; only of Kingdon and of money, and he was afraid of both.

He had always been afraid of money. His greedy love of it had made him afraid of it, and he was afraid of Kingdon because he knew that Kingdon was aware of this fear of his. And as the florins rained down upon him and about him and trickled hither and thither in glinting silver streams, the fear and the greed that was in him stalked in his glance and took the power of coordinated action out of his limbs.

The clawing, scrambling welter of blacks that swept in about him and, by virtue of the furious competition that ensued, threatened to engulf him altogether, scarcely seemed to bother him. A lesser man would have been rushed off his feet and would probably have found himself at the bottom of the heap. Marsallow towered above it always and seemed to be able to scatter it in any given direction at will.

Yet his eyes darted about him in a frightened kind of way as his great left hand pawed undecidedly at the screaming pack that threatened at any moment, in the frenzy of its own greed, to roll completely over him in a glistening ebony wave.

Then he glanced up at Kingdon and found the little man's quiet sure eyes fixed steadily upon him. Kingdon's eyes did not gloat. They had not the slightest trace of triumph in them. Just that same quiet, sure look that did not retreat and did not attack. And the sack of silver gaped and allowed some more silver rain to fall.

Marsallow shivered. Perhaps he realized the full meaning of Kingdon's method of expressing himself. Certainly he knew when he was face to face with a climax. And though he swayed and lurched this way and that and seemed likely to go down at any moment, he kept his feet and looked up at Kingdon steadily enough, knowing without any doubt who had tricked him and trapped him and snatched from under his very eyes this treasure that he had planned and waited for so long.

His glance dropped a little to Kingdon's throat, stayed there a moment or two, and came away again to look about him; at Randolph, at Annette and at Bridges; pawing and kicking himself clear of the clawing, scrambling blacks the while.

Again one glittering eye came back to Kingdon—to the gaping sack—to Kingdon's throat just a little above it.

When it was done he would let the scrambling natives take the bullets if the white man with the gun dared shoot into the middle of the pack. Marsallow did not think the white man who was a stranger to him would. He had been in situations of the sort before.

Once more he looked about him, as if seeking a way out, pawing and kicking and apparently intent only upon keeping himself on his feet.

Then suddenly he whirled.

A long thin streak of light leaped up to meet a sudden stream of silver coming down, and at the same instant—actually a split second sooner—something equally long and lightning-like flashed past Bridges' ear.

Marsallow straightened convulsively, spun sidewise and went down. In a moment he was engulfed in the welter of

shining black bodies that had lunged toward the new shower of silver.

"My God, girl!" Bridges gasped hoarsely. "What on earth—"

Annette was not listening. She was not even looking to see what had happened to Marsallow. She was looking up at the veranda rail in which Marsallow's knife quivered and glinted its answer to the rays of a dying sun; and at Kingdon who smiled to her assuringly, then raced for the stairs.

Bridges stared at Annette, stared at Marsallow's knife, stared at the place where Marsallow had been, then saw Kingdon coming downstairs at breakneck speed, and decided it was time he became district commissioner.

Randolph's blond head was already leaping into the midst of things, and a red-head that had no business to be there at all suddenly appeared from the opposite direction and began throwing natives out of the way as if they were mangrove sticks. Everybody helped except Annette, who kept looking up at Marsallow's knife, and occasionally shifting her glance to Kingdon as if to be quite sure Marsallow's knife really was sticking in the veranda rail.

The bag of silver, just a little to the left of the knife, gaped down at the whole weird proceedings and seemed to wink to the swiftly setting sun as a few more glinting florins trickled lazily over the rail and dropped into the human maelstrom below.

Twenty-seven pounds eight shillings—twenty-seven pounds ten—twelve—fourteen—sixteen—almost eighteen.

But the last florin decided to stop at the edge of the rail and the rain of silver was over.

Twenty-seven pounds sixteen shillings.

Not a very high price for the immortal soul of a superman.

CURIOUSLY enough, there were two knife wounds in Marsallow's body when the pack of natives had been scattered and an examination had been made possible. The wound in the neck might have proved fatal, but the one immediately over the heart had left nothing to chance. Annette's knife also was missing.

Whether some member of the branch boat's crew, or a beach boy with a very recent grudge to settle, had been responsible, it was impossible to say.

However, Randolph thought he detected a familiar squat figure on the fringe of the scattering black mob; a squat figure that had acquired a limp but nevertheless slithered off into the gathering dark with wraith-like speed and was immediately lost to sight in the murky shadows along the water front.

In any event, as things turned out, the presence of Bridges was a most fortunate bit of foresight on Kingdon's part. Bridges appreciated this quite as much as Kingdon. He appreciated it so much that he eyed Kingdon with grave suspicion when he was seated on the African Merchants' house veranda a little while later and conducted an informal *post mortem* that dispensed with the presence of the recently deceased.

Night had come down with more than usually climactic suddenness. The rabble on the beach had whispered off into a silence that, presently, was broken only by the ominous blows of a carpenter's hammer. But the lights of the stand lamps in Charnton's office showed that every one on the veranda was very quiet, rather white and not a little awed; every one, that is, except Annette, whose expression seemed to have found a new kind of glory.

Then Bridges, who could not keep his eyes off her face for more than a few seconds at a time, said to her:

"You beat Marsallow's throw by something less than a split second. At that, he almost nailed our friend here—" indicating Kingdon. "How did you know how to time your throw so nicely?"

Annette was looking beyond the rail at the murky decks of the branch boat and for a moment it was as if she had not heard Bridges' query. It was finished. Done. The lie was ended. Marsallow and the lie together. She was free.

"I said, how did you know—"

"Always when he is make mos' sure he turn twice his head and throw the second time. He do not move the body, jus' the head."

Bridges' expression was a study in beneficent unbelief. He glanced at Kingdon, then his eyes came back to the girl, who did not seem to be aware that she had said anything in the least out of the way.

"You mean you have seen him throw knives at human targets before?"

Annette's eyes came round and steadily met those of the district commissioner.

"Marsallow was a killer of many men. Three time have I seen him strike like the snake that is make no sound. Twice when I am ver' little I see this, and once when I am fourteen years. It is then I make up the mind to learn to throw the knife also." She looked quickly toward Kingdon. "It is not to believe you are here and Marsallow is not! Never have I seen him miss the mark. Never!"

Bridges smiled a dry, bland smile.

"Perhaps you never tried chucking a knife at him before," he suggested. "A little thing like that does upset a man. Just think of the fuss a golfer makes about a little conversation."

Then, abruptly, to Kingdon—

"How did you know Marsallow would be standing conveniently under the veranda to allow you to pour two shilling pieces down on his head?"

Kingdon smiled.

"I didn't. I hadn't the faintest notion what I was going to do with the money till Marsallow was hugging the post under the veranda and Charnton and his assistants went downstairs. Then Duncan and I sneaked up the back way with a Kroo boy lugging the money bag, and the rest was simple."

"H-m-m-m. But you must have known the effect it would have beforehand?"

Kingdon nodded a little sadly.

"I'm afraid I did. Marsallow, like the natives hereabout, had one great weakness. He was greedy for money. He lived for it, killed for it no doubt, and it finally killed him. I suppose that is dramatic justice, but that man had the qualities of real greatness in him if they hadn't been twisted and distorted by greed. Imagine, Bridges, being given a body like that, huge, powerful, swift, dynamic and—"

Kingdon stopped suddenly, realized what everybody was likely to think and looked down at his feet, then quickly up again as he found a fat hand on his shoulder that rested there in a quieting, motherly sort of way.

"Balloch sat up in bed and asked what day it was," Harth explained, taking the opportunity to account for his presence as an excuse to change the subject. "So I thought he was well enough to take care of things for awhile."

"And I am to suppose," Bridges interposed dryly, "I was led into this with the malicious intent to involve an official in his Majesty's service in a none too private squabble over a sackful of two-shilling bits. The next time, Kingdon, you invite me so casually to come along and have a drink, I'll bring a squad of police and a Yoruba machine gun crew."

He rose as everybody laughed, and he spoke directly to Randolph.

"You will see to it that no one attached to your staff here is permitted to leave until I assure you that the whole matter has been disposed of to the full satisfaction of the law."

The senior partner of the African Merchants' Company bowed and said simply—

"Yes, sir."

Bridges looked at Annette.

"I am afraid I shall have to ask you to do my wife the honor to keep her company for a few days. That is, unless you would prefer to put up at the nurses' bungalow?"

"Not the nurses' bungalow, señor." Annette said quickly. "I have not the fever and—and the wife of you, señor, mus' be mos' nice—if you please."

Bridges nodded dryly and glanced at Kingdon.

"You knew what you were doing all right when you left her behind to do your

dirty work for you." Again he turned to Randolph. "My assistant and probably somebody from the police commissioner's office will be along shortly to take official charge of things. Just a formality. Give them all the help you can, and see to it that Marsallow's effects are not disturbed in any way by any one."

A colored sergeant of police, followed by a fledgling assistant police commissioner, appeared as if in answer to Bridges' announcement.

"Hello, Tate. Thanks for hurrying and saving me from the bother of making excuses to my wife. She hates me to keep dinner waiting." He tucked Annette's hand in his arm. "Let's get along. My wife is just about your size and you'll just have about time to dress for—"

"My trunks, señor, they are on the branch boat."

"Fine. Randolph—the lady's trunks. Good night, Kingdon. Sorry I must swipe your señorita, but the law demands it. Our extra bedroom is the only jail we have for lady prisoners who are very beautiful. The other kind have to go to the nurses' bungalow whether they like us or not."

THUS the law departed; but Annette looked back as she turned the corner of the veranda—not at her new found cousin, or at Harth or at the handsome young assistant police commissioner or at any one at all except Kingdon who, for some reason or other, looked just a little white about the corners of his mouth.

"Good night, señor."

Kingdon bowed gravely; more gravely than he knew; and then she was gone and he felt suddenly tired, as if something that had been holding him together had snapped. He rested a hand on Harth's arm, glanced at Randolph, who was watching him quietly while seeming to be giving all of his attention to Tate, the assistant police commissioner.

"I imagine that's all," Kingdon said to Harth. "We'd better get back to our nursing."

Randolph separated himself from Tate quite suddenly.

"You understand, sir, that I must stay here?" he said simply to Kingdon.

"After all this bother, I'd hope so," Kingdon said and smiled. "Good luck to you."

"Thank you, sir."

They shook hands simply enough, Harth said "chin-chin" in his most matter-of-fact every day manner, and Kingdon and he passed on; not simply around the corner of the veranda and down the stairs to the beach, but also down from the cold and dizzy heights frequented by the plutocracy in oil river trade.

Randolph and Annette were no longer Randolph and Annette. They were The African Merchants' Company. They were more mighty than Alphabet Colton who, after all, was only agent-general for Marsden & Company. They stood upon the same level as old Andrew Marsden himself, who was the son of that older Andrew Marsden who had lacked only a crown to make him a king.

On the way back to Marsden's beach Kingdon had nothing to say and Harth did not interrupt him. They both headed for Balloch's room when they reached the top of the stairs and found the big beach clerk sitting up in bed dutifully obeying the clock by shaking some more tabloids of quinine out of the bottle beside his bed.

"What's been goin' on while I've been dying?" he asked when the quinine was down where it belonged. "I suppose Randolph's boyish bob is all out of curl with him trying to run two jobs all at once?"

Kingdon glanced at Harth and Harth looked around for the clinical thermometer.

"That's a wise precaution," Kingdon said. "If his temperature is low enough, tell him about it."

So Harth stuck the thermometer into Balloch's mouth, and clumped into a chair beside Balloch's bed while Kingdon departed to his own end of the house where, by the gracious dispensation of

Providence, he could be quite alone.

He sat in his favorite corner of the veranda a long while before he even thought of dressing for dinner, and he looked out upon nothing at all that was tangible—not even the lights of the *Ganna-Ganna*—seeing only the picture that he knew would remain with him as long as he lived; the picture Annette had made the first time she had demonstrated how thoroughly well she could throw a knife.

Before this she had been just a very young girl in need of a great deal of help; but from then on she had become every inch a woman.

Kingdon did not know why this was so, or why he liked the picture so well, but he supposed it was because it demonstrated the kind of vibrant virility and passion that he lacked. It was the kind of thing that was altogether antithetical to himself, and that he had been privileged to play the part of cavalier in the cause of a girl who could look and act as Annette had done then, gave him an oddly satisfying sensation of peace even though he was dimly aware of a poignant regret that the play was ended and the curtain rung down.

In a few days, of course, he would probably have forgotten all about it. Life would once more drift into its customary channels and Annette would in all likelihood become so popular among the civil and military officers of the government that she would just naturally drift, by that preliminary route, into the new life that lay, like a garden of enchantment, before her.

In a month or two—well, she would be in England long before that and the whole business would have become a kind of bad dream. Certainly she would never have cause to complain of loneliness again; not with half a million pounds to draw upon.

Presently he laughed, rose, went into his office and prepared a cable that asked the home office for a new junior assistant. Then he bathed, dressed and dined and played billiards with Harth on the lumpy table until past midnight.

Harth did not ask his boss what in Hades was the matter with him. He did not have to. To his lasting amazement, he found himself duty bound to humor Kingdon as best he could, and tried to help him forget the cavalier business and talk print cloths or rain boots or just plain nonsense. Anything, Harth felt, was better than a line as hackneyed as happily ever after.

John Randolph MacBeth, however, seemed to have other ideas about what Kingdon's conception of the future ought to be. Those ideas of his developed a voice on the promenade deck of the *Ganna-Ganna* two days later.

Marsallow's bag of papers apparently produced nothing in the shape of incriminating evidence against him, and the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Annette's mother was a mystery that the imagination could solve according to its knowledge of the methods of the Señor Marsallow, who had had a failing for striking "like the snake that is make no sound at all."

In due time, of course, waiting upon the normal processes of law, it would be established that Marsallow's sister was not *the* Lolita Ramirez, and the Marsallow angle of the case would be disposed of forever.

MEANTIME it happened that Annette was able to get out of jail in time to carry out her original intention to take passage on Duncan's ship. This flattered and pleased Duncan, particularly since he knew she was having a very enjoyable time of it as the guest of the government and that she could normally be expected to wait for the following week's mail boat; and it indicated principally that Annette had her own very clearly defined standards of loyalty and gratitude, even when they were not expected to be expressed.

She had thanked everybody for being so kind to her in that "so ver' ugly country", and she had said all her goodbys save one. Her cousin, to whose mother she had consented to be delivered

in good order and condition, did not count. She was going to meet his fiancée when she reached England.

But, shortly before the *Ganna-Ganna* was ready to cast off from Perkins & Gray's wharf, Randolph, Kingdon and she sat together on the promenade deck, facing the river. She was dressed very simply in white with a touch of red sticking out of the trifling pocket of her dress, and Bridges had been at some pains to fix a rose in her hair so that it would stay there.

Presently Randolph said respectfully to Kingdon:

"It is perhaps a little premature, sir, to make mention of this, but my cousin and I seemed to get the same inspiration at the same time and—that is—well, I understand your contract with Marsden & Company is made only for the duration of your stay on the coast and that a new contract is made every time you go home on leave and return. So my cousin and I—"

"I shouldn't advise it," Kingdon said almost sharply and his quiet eyes had become rather quieter than they had ever been.

Randolph bowed. Annette's lips parted as if she would speak, but a look from her senior partner silenced her and after a little while, Randolph said:

"I appreciate your attitude and I respect it. But you must not forget, sir, that I—that we—that—oh, damn it, sir, we may be children in your eyes but we are not fools. We know who put us where we are at this moment, and we are just selfish enough and sensible enough to want to stay there. If you like that view of the matter better, we don't mind." He leaned forward in his chair and became even more convincing. "This isn't gratitude I'm spouting, sir. It's self-protection. I have every confidence in Grant, the company's treasurer, as far as the home office is concerned. But there is no one out here who gives me that kind of confidence; the kind of confidence you give me."

Kingdon stared straight ahead at the blank face of the bush on the opposite side of the river.

"What about your Opobo, Calabar and Egwanga men?" he asked quietly. "Or Fraser of Benin River, or Daniels of Sapeli? Do you know them? Have you given yourself a chance to know them?"

Randolph looked bothered.

"Well, you see, sir, while the names you mention are familiar to me—"

"Their work and their loyalty are things you know very little about? Well, it so happens that I do know something about them." He paused, turned and looked directly at Randolph. "Fraser of Benin River and Daniels of Sapeli can have a Marsden & Company contract any time they want one, and they could have had one any time in the past ten years. That's Andrew Marsden's indorsement of them, and he doesn't hanker after another company's agents unless he thinks their talents are being wasted or unappreciated or cluttered with internal politics or something of the sort."

Randolph's color heightened a little and he bit his underlip nervously. Kingdon went right on.

"Then there is Ogilvie of Egwanga." He smiled as if it gave him real pleasure just to mention Ogilvie's name. "Ogilvie is perhaps the best trader in the business. With your company, since the MacBeth brothers died, he's never had the chance he deserves. You can have every confidence in him, both as a man and as a trader. He is one of my best friends and I can vouch for him without any reservation."

Randolph nodded and in his eyes and Annette's was a look of almost exultant admiration.

"I know about Ogilvie," Randolph said hurriedly, "and I am going to bring him to Warri to straighten things out for me here. I am going to do this as a preliminary to promoting him to the post of assistant agent general."

"Fine! I am very glad. And I hope you are not forgetting MacDonald of Calabar?"

Randolph smiled slightly.

"What would you do with MacDonald, sir?"

"I'd create a kind of supervising agentship, giving him control of the whole Calabar section. He knows that territory as no trader has ever known it. Up here he might be a lost soul. Down there—" he turned quickly to Randolph— "you know, the loyalty of the men I've mentioned, in spite of a dozen opportunities to switch their allegiance elsewhere, is one of the very finest things in the history of Oil River's trade. I hope you won't ever forget it."

Annette's hand reach out impulsively to touch Kingdon's arm, but she halted the impulse midway and allowed the hand to drop into her lap again.

"I am very glad to hear you say that, sir," Randolph said quietly. "And you can rest assured that I shall remember it. But what my cousin and I had in mind was that you would help us immeasurably by accepting the agent-generalship of the company and—"

"Talk to Ogilvie first," Kingdon said crisply and rose, "and give yourself a chance to know him. He has given twenty-odd years of his life to your company. I haven't given more than twenty-odd hours. And even if he hadn't nursed me through blackwater fever once upon a time, he's too good a friend of mine for me to allow you to play a trick like that on him." Then he laughed quite freely and heartily. "Ogilvie my assistant! I am afraid, young man, you need a lot of advice."

Annette and Randolph also rose, and this time Annette's hand did reach Kingdon's arm and gripped it tightly.

"You are so loyal to your frien'," she said softly. "It is ver' beautiful to me. But I, too, am the friend of you, and you have say to me, like the ver' true gentleman, 'I am at your service.' And now you are not at all." She looked at him very steadily. "Please to help, Señor Kingdon. I am the babe in the wood with my cousin, and it is all so confuse and dark where you are not, señor. Please!"

Kingdon hesitated, met her eyes quietly enough, then slowly turned to Randolph.

"I am quite sensible of the honor you are both doing me but it would be just silly to ask a man like Ogilvie to act as my assistant, to say nothing of the slight to the other men I have named. Meantime I hope you will bring Ogilvie up here very soon. I haven't seen him in almost three years, and I'd surely enjoy meeting him again."

He turned to Annette and carefully ignored their looks of disappointment.

"I think I'd better run along. I hope you have an interesting and pleasant voyage home and I know you'll be well cared for. It has been an honor and a pleasure to have been of service to you, and I hope you will be very happy. Goodby."

Randolph had turned to the rail, a cloudy look in his childlike blue eyes.

"Thank you, señor," Annette said simply. "It has been mos' beautiful to know you. Always till I am ver', ver' old, I will hear you say to me, 'I am at your service.' And it will be like the ver' beautiful music to me. Goodby, Señor Kingdon."

She held out her hand and he took it, bowed over it, suddenly pressed it to his lips, turned sharply and was gone around the corner of a deckhouse.

Randolph followed, waving his goodby to his partner and cousin whose eyes were very wide and starry.

But then or later it did not do him any appreciable good to catch up with Kingdon.

FOR ALMOST six months, while Ogilvie proceeded with the work of reorganizing the African Merchants' Company, swapped drinks and stories with Kingdon, played billiards and poker with him and talked like an automobile salesman to induce the little man to join forces with him, Kingdon refused to commit himself.

Then he went home on leave to think it over from another perspective and found Annette, quite alone, on Princess Dock, Liverpool, waiting for him.

"I am escape," she told him in the taxi, when he had retrieved his baggage and his breath. "My aunt she is ver' angry, but the passenger list and the letter from my cousin say you are on the ship, and so I am escape. You are not glad?"

She was very beautiful. The month was May and even the Liverpool waterfront seemed to catch something of the glimpse of heaven or hell or whatever it was that was in Annette's eyes. She held Kingdon's hand quite naturally, and he just looked at her and wondered if she realized that he wasn't as old as he had been six months ago, or she as young.

"You see, señor," she confided, "the aunt of me she say I mus' have the husban'—that I am too wild—that I have not the restraint or the discreet or the ver' good sense at all. You see?"

"Perhaps she's right," Kingdon said mildly. "Six months ago I thought you should have a husband."

"But, señor, I am not then free," Annette explained, and the expression that went with the explanation was very dry and very wise. "Now, I am free. Six months I am free, señor, with the aunt and the sister of the aunt, and the fiancée of the cousin, and the uncle of the cousin and the father of the nephew and the nephew of the aunt and the so many people who have tell me what I am to do and am not to do all the day. Is that to be free, señor? No. Not at all. So I have decide the husban' is mos' better. He is one. The dozen is too many. So I am escape to meet the ship and—please to forgive and to pardon—but I do not go back to the aunt. No. Not at all."

"Nonsense, child! You can't—"

"I am not the child. I am nineteen years. Not at all am I to go back to the aunt. No. I have decide upon the husban'. That is ver' much better. And so I am escape to meet the ship—if you please."

Kingdon looked out of the taxi window at a double decked trolley that rumbled past, read the signs on some shop windows, saw a derelict thrown out of a pub and watched a few sparrows help themselves to the overflow from a truck horse's feed bag. An endless procession of feet passed before his eyes for a few moments, then he lifted his eyes to a clock that said it was twenty minutes past four. He knew it wasn't twenty minutes past four, so he mechanically went in search of his watch and found that Annette held his hand. The moist, warm grip of her slender fingers talked to him through all the jumble of impressions and of memories.

"I am escape to you," she said simply. "Once, on the *Ganna-Ganna*, you are kiss my hand. It is like ver', ver' many words to me—the words of the tongue that will not speak because I am the child, because I am ver' rich, because—too many because, señor. So I am escape to meet you, señor—if you please."

Lime Street Station and Kingdon's favorite hotel would show at the next turn. He looked down at her hand, then up into her waiting eyes. There was a long, long pause—at least five seconds.

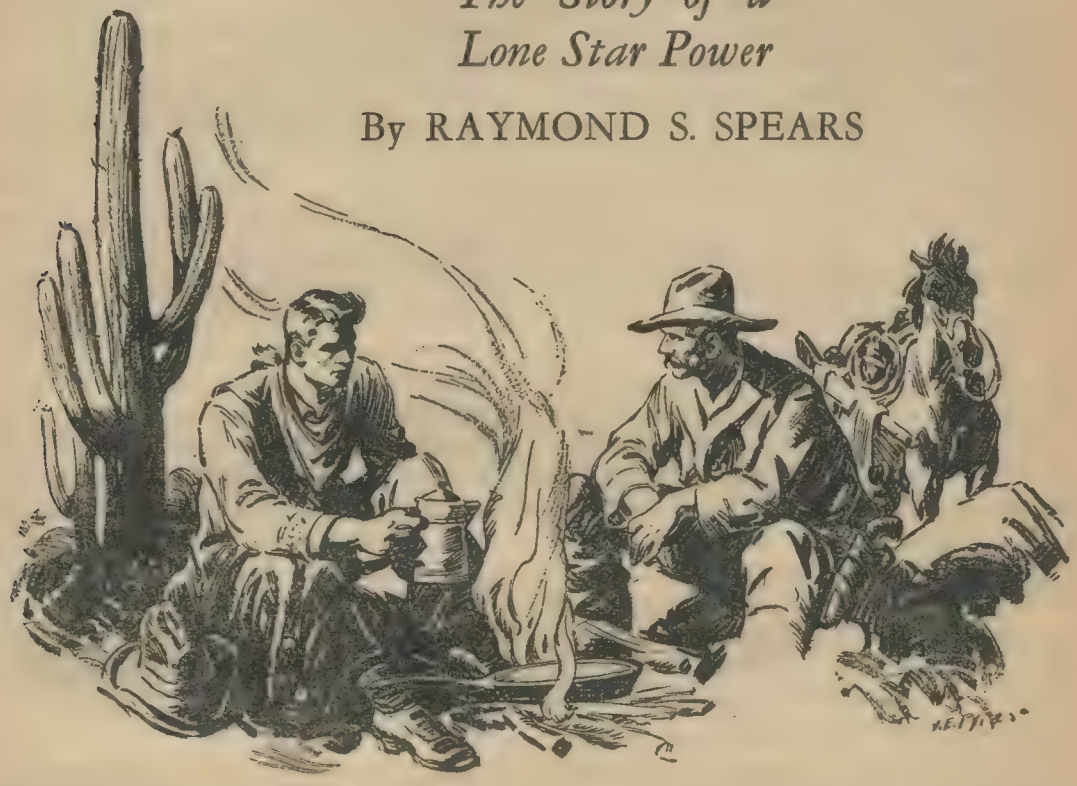
"I am at your service."

THE END

A Ranger Uncle

The Story of a Lone Star Power

By RAYMOND S. SPEARS



WORD reached the scattered camps of the Texas Rangers that they were to be abolished. The force knows but one disaster in the world, and that is the chance that they will all in a moment become a mere tradition as unbelievable as it is true, for one could not exaggerate the Rangers. Every once in awhile the word goes around that the need of Rangers has vanished and they might as well be disbanded. Here is a story of one of those movements to put the Rangers out of business.

Honest John Field was a great farmer in the Middle Strip of Texas, where the long Ozark Range stretches down toward the Border in a vast, low belt of rolling hills, covered with agricultural lands, a strip of much more than the area of New York State—sixty thousand square miles of soil fit to be cultivated. When Honest John went down East, any place from Chicago to Boston, everywhere he went he was recognized as Texas, and he heard small boys exclaiming in awe and hope:

"He's from Texas! My land, I bet he has notches on both sides of his gun. Gracious, perhaps he's a captain of the Texas Rangers! I bet he's awf'ly deadly!"

Honest John had his strong points, but killing was not one of them. The only use of guns he had made was shooting crows which were stealing his planted seeds. Herein he represented Texas of the farms. High spirited, competent, courageous, he did not have to be a killer. In a vast and mighty land, with five distinct climates, the old man thought he knew Texas because he was located in the middle of the two hundred and sixty thousand square miles of the State.

As a proud Lone Star power, he spoke

for half a million honest and peaceable farmers, and these people were stirred by his voice against the reputation a Texan seemed to have, as regards Texas Rangers. The State Police were dejected by their camp-fires, riding in misery and sorrow; for if Honest John did not know them and was indignant at being mistaken for a Ranger, they knew him. They also knew countless and astonishing things about the vast land of Texas, about its numerous leading citizens—and its misleading citizens; wherein their usefulness was chiefly valuable.

The son of Honest John's brother was a Ranger, which probably was provoking for the old man, since the boy had gone to join the Rangers against his guardian's imperious will. Now the youngster was riding deserts, trailing through the mesquite, "bedding down in cactus and drinking caustic alkali" as the saying is—thriving on it, if one believes the Ranger songs.

Tom Field was camped with Captain Caile, holding down an empire in which cussedness had its volcanic eruptions throughout the far fastness of the red gravels, the blue hills, the mesquite and thorny brush, called chaparral—though the land is shrub grown, rather than dwarfed forest to which chaparral applies. Field's holster held a .45, his boot a .30-30 and his shirt a star badge which he had bought himself. All a man receives from the State is a commission printed and superscribed on none too good paper, his accouterments being his own affair, from horseshoes to sombrero. Tom had been disinherited for the privilege of crouching at thorny wilderness passes, heading criminals on their runways and upholding the Texas statutes. He had endured thirst, hunger and peril for Texas. In him was the Ranger sense of honor.

"Well, Tom, we're done!" Captain Caile said. "The bill's sure to go through."

"Yeh," Tom said with sudden loquaciousness, instead of nodding to his superior. "That's hell!"

The grizzled veteran Ranger captain, forty years of age, sat on his heels beside the private, drew a keen snapback knife and began to whittle a thorn to a sharper point, carving an eye hole in the blunt end, making a Ranger needle to thread with centipede spine sinew for sewing together the lips of their own wounds, according to the song.

"Cap'n," the Ranger private cried, in sudden anger, "my name's Field and I'm ashamed of it. If he was an outlaw, I could go git and tame him, but how you going to tame a danged old fool?"

"Hold on, boy!" the captain warned. "He ain't a fool, but he's jes' naturally limited and ignorant. That's all. No Field's a fool, lad. And you've no right to malign the name of one of our most accomplished Rangers."

The youth blushed. Praise did not often fall on a Ranger's ears, but the boy of twenty-one had more than once heard his superiors say things that were as embarrassing as they were significant, all on account of feats that loomed conspicuous among the terrific Ranger commonplaces.

"Anything we can do, Tom?" the captain asked casually. "You'd ought to have a line on these heah Field peculiarities."

Field grinned sheepishly, blushing. He had his own habits, which were in some respects conspicuous. To tell the Ranger captain these seemed in a measure superfluous, since he had observed them. Still, the problem was to take advantage of his uncle's habits and instincts, if feasible.

There is guile in the Ranger force, in no other class perhaps quite the same kind and quality of cunning and effectiveness.

"Well, sir, Captain," Tom admitted, "I've been thinking. You see, there's Della—"

The boy blushed, swallowed, twisted uneasily as he hesitated.

"Yeh!" The captain nodded, scowling. "There's Della, with one of the finest cattle ranches in the west Texas country. What good'd her herds be 'f the Ranger protection was withdrawn? Why, there's that girl, and there's her outfit, good—but the rustlers would sweat her herds a few head here and a few head there. She'd have to reckon ten per cent. to

twelve per cent. loss, instead of the six per cent. she's cut the drain to, following her dad's ways."

"Well, I'll tell you, Captain," Tom said, his voice low but full of meaning. "She told me she'd sell her ranch to Uncle John, if it could be arranged. The fact is, she's sold her cattle in El Paso, every head."

"What! You mean that, Tom! She'd actually sell—she ain't scared?"

"No, sir, not scared. "Tom shook his head. "She just thinks a sight of the Rangers. She'd take $400,000 for her bare place—"

"Hit's worth $800,000 if hit's worth a dollar!" the captain said indignantly. "Stocked, it's worth a million."

"She's willing to make a sacrifice," Tom said. "If Uncle John had holdings out here, he'd get acquainted. You see, he's all fenced in."

"Shu-u-u!" the captain exclaimed. "You got a head, Tom."

"I'd never thought of it." The Ranger shook his head. "If I'd thought of it, I'd rather died'n had an idea like that, account of—"

"It might look like you was favoring your own job flesh and blood," the captain said. "All right, Tom. I'm going over and have a talk with Della. I don't expect you need it a bit, Tom, but I'm going to horn in enough to kinda hint you're a blamed good Ranger, but with peculiarities. Dadgone you boys! I'll say you got habits and personalities."

HE RODE away, leaving the private grinning, happy and embarrassed. Captain Caile never talked to his boys without raising blisters among the blushes of satisfaction. But out yonder, talking to outsiders— Hue-e-e!

Having left Tom a bag of provisions and whole boxes of ammunition, since practise with firearms would eat up a Ranger's wages if somehow the cartridges were not forthcoming in complete and ample supply, Tom fired a few dozen careful shots with a .22 caliber pistol, which none of the other boys knew he had because it was useful but plumb ridiculous.

Across the river rose jagged, dark stone heights of mountains, sloping into the pale sunlit yellow flood. On the near side were miles of water washed knobs and rocks, stretches of sand and hillocks of gravel, blocks of stone, huge boulders, scattering clusters of mesquite along bottoms under which were tufts of cactus-like bonfires, for a cloudburst had watered the desert and it was blossoming as a rose.

As far as the Ranger and his captain could see, in whatever direction they rode or looked, these tufts of barrel-cactus flowers lifted their petals in blossoms of white, red, orange, purple, blue and lemon yellow, and there were gardens of yellow and blue, and other posies of a thousand or ten thousand acres in extent. As the captain rode, he called—and lots of others called—his jaunt of sixty miles "Ranger flower inspection"; but Tom's job was "counting posy petals", sitting still on watch.

Here and there in the wastes were frames of bones, ribs in arches hung with shredded strips of hide. On the fresh carcasses ants and vultures fed in unhappy rivalry, sometimes a vulture flopping away in intense agitation because the ants mistook it for part of the feast, or the warrior ants were fighting for exclusive domain.

Tom Field could not go in the daytime down to the river to get a drink. That might betray his presence there. So at night Tom had to slip over to the river with his waterbag and catch a cool clear supply where the mesquite wash emptied out its underground flow. On a spring hole eight miles back from the river was the Hacienda outfit of the Duncan ranch. The father and mother Duncans had been buried seventy miles westward in a cemetery. Della Duncan was not at home, for she had been obliged to go to town about some business, being now with her aunt at El Paso. She had sold her cattle on the high beef market and let it be understood she had to do this

because the Rangers were going to be abolished.

Apparently she was foresighted, seeing a loss of cattle if Ranger protection were withdrawn.

Captain Caile took the Ranger company automobile at the camp and rode to town, where he found Della. Yes, she would sell the Duncan ranch, to Honest John Field, for any price. She said it with the softness of her chin coming tight. She was a lovely girl; her face and figure were beautiful. In her eyes was the cool directness that partly veiled the anguish of her spirit when she remembered her parents, who had been murdered by bandits seeking hidden treasure. The Ranger captain knew whence had come the inspiration to sell Honest John Field sixty-four thousand acres of land at the boundary of which lurked Tom Field, steadfast and ready.

Eight days after Captain Caile left El Paso, Emmet Welden arrived in Elvarden, where Honest John Field lived. He was driven in a taxi to the wide, long, low concrete and squared timber ranch-house amid spacious lawn and at the heart of seven thousand acres of cultivated land. He found Honest John digesting his dinner—the noon meal.

"Mr. Field," Welden said, "I met you in Austin five years ago, and you said that possibly you would be interested in a few years in a strictly cattle country proposition. I have a ranch to sell for a young woman. Her parents—ah—died some time since. This is the Duncan property, sixty-four thousand acres. It has ample water holes, which did not dry up during the three years local drought. It grazes five thousand head comfortably. What I think would interest you most is the fact that there are fountain wells, which can almost surely be increased. Anyhow, there are four hundred acres of unfailing alfalfa sheltered from the northers. Miss Duncan will sell to you at practically your own price."

"No!" Honest John Field shook his head shortly. "I've changed my mind."

Welden looked at the rich watered land in a vista of miles from where he sat. His face was without expression. He was a man of forty-odd years. He was dark, rotund, and exuded personality, even in his quietest mood. He was known by his associates as "the most dangerous real estate agent" because he delighted in selling to the most difficult prospects to be found. He never used the same method or the same argument twice.

"Of course, ordinarily, that would settle the matter," Welden commented, "but it happens that you can not afford to refuse this offer. You must pay six hundred thousand dollars for the Duncan ranch. That is reasonable. It is even cheap—considering how easy it is to raise cattle there."

"I must buy it?" Honest John turned with a slow, hard grin, for in all his experience he had never been compelled to buy anything he was determined not to buy.

"Yes—or go down in the traditions of Texas as yellow."

Welden rose from his seat, shook his immaculate clothes and started toward the screened porch door.

"What!" Honest John sprang to his feet with angry agility.

"I mean it." Welden looked him in the eye. "You live here in this fat land of strong grass and leave us out in the arid regions, where homes are miles, scores of miles, apart, where renegade whites, blacks, reds and mongrels lurk in the mesquite waiting the day when our police forces are removed. You remove the Rangers, a young woman's sole protection — Della Duncan's guardians — because you are five hundred miles from the danger line. The price of that ranch is six hundred thousand dollars and you can't honorably refuse to buy. Good day!"

Honest John Field's jaw dropped. He clicked his teeth and then the ends of his lips whipped uncertainly.

"Reckon I'm called?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Field—" Welden paused.

"Had your dinner?"

"Yes."

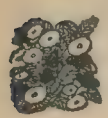
"We'll draw up the papers. Attorney'll be here in half an hour."

And Honest John paid Emmet Welden a hundred thousand dollars down. He gave him his signature on the papers for the purchase of Della Duncan's ranch at six hundred thousand dollars. Then Welden would have gone back to the young woman, only Honest John restrained him.

"Hold on." The Central Garden farmer smiled. "You'll have to show me that ranch. It would be the first time I ever bought sight unseen. The maps are all right. The argument I couldn't resist, of course. But you understand—"

"Mr. Field," Welden said with emphasis, "I'd rather show you that ranch than show any one in the world the Garden of Eden, yes, sir! It's a bargain and you'll admit it."

Field laughed. The following day the two, in Field's travel car, started southwest. They rolled for two hundred miles through farms. They entered fenced ranches, and here they saw the glory of a wild flower garden. On the right hand they looked down into a valley ten miles wide. The bottom of the valley looked like a lake, but it was a bed fifteen miles long and seven miles wide of blue flowers. Toward the left hand they saw a mountain that was buttercup yellow in the sunshine—and the yellow was of flowers. They rode through beds of flowers, wild and fragrant in the soft spring sunshine; not in yards, or rods, but in acres, and more than acres; in square miles.



THEY saw hundreds of square miles of flowers. Welden turned to Field and said:

"Doesn't it seem curious that Texas is literally a land of honey?"

"Not so curious—" Field shook his head—"that is, in view of those flowers. We could beat France making perfumery if we'd utilize the native products."

"Sure. Hadn't thought of that," Welden exclaimed. "By George, now, you know, you've said something."

"Generally when I speak I say something," Honest John replied dryly.

They rolled for miles, through counties, territories, districts and regions. They left behind them the land of sunshine and rains. They entered the crystalline glare of the arid lands. They shaped their course by signboards amid the mesquite and saw the Carmine hue of cactus in blossom. They saw the mesquite taper down to low shrubs in the desperate climate. The Davis, the Guadaloup, the Eagle—cluster after cluster of mountains appeared ahead of them against the horizon, in dark menacing shadows, and they entered the land of spines and claws, of thirst and heat, of toil without reward and wasting efforts—where the spirit rises in exaltation and the soul expands into vast, free horizons. They had left the flower garden for the dusty whirlwinds.

Honest John Field had lived all his life in gardens and amid meadows, where crops were sure and where shelter was certain. He now sat beside a desert wagon rut, beside a car whose motor bearings had burned out because the oiling system had all smudged up. He realized that some poor devil of a filling pump owner had mixed crude oil with the motor oil, to make it go farther. He paid a dollar a mile, after a hungry and thirsty night in the desert, for a tow to town—cheap at that—and then waited two days while the garage man brought by telegraph and parcel post bearings from a supply house four hundred miles away.

"Gracious!" The old farmer shook his head. "I never realized the size of Texas before!"

"It's sure far and wide—" Welden nodded—"but wait!"

"Wait?" Honest John repeated wonderingly.

They went beyond the plateau town. They left the railroads. They traversed mountain ranges. They crossed enormous desert valleys. They held a course, by pilot knobs and at forks twenty miles beyond another fork, they gathered around a sign board which the wind had dug out, to discuss how it had stood and faced, knowing that to guess wrong would mean a hundred wasted miles.

And so, at last, they came down out of a barren tumult of ridge, red clay and sparking rock, wide scattered withered mesquite and gray cacti, to a spur from which they looked into a vast basin in whose whited desolation was a dark green rectangle, alfalfa watered by strange fountain wells, and tiny blocks, like play houses, which were really ranch buildings.

"Here's your north line," Welden said. "It goes to that knob over there. The northwest corner is against that white face butte. The Rio Grande is the south line, and the west line points into that gap, across the river. Your east line is beyond that spur range there."

"Yes, yes." Honest John nodded, replying in a half whisper, "You're right, it's a bargain."

Welden had forced his hand. He had stung his conscience. He had unloaded on one of the shrewdest land buyers and traders sixty-four thousand acres of rock and sand, of clay and shale, of mountain and valley that apparently was utterly sterile and worthless. But Honest John, gazing at the ranch, felt his disappointment and contempt yielding to something else. This land speculation need not worry him, though it proved a total loss. His income would take care of the purchase. In his heart stirred a curious, inexplicable exultation. Already he loved that barren waste, but not for its pasturage, which fed only one cow to the ten acres.

He went down into the valley of the ranch and drew up at the doorway. No one was there. The young woman had stripped the acres of cattle and sent away the cowboys and post hole diggers. Jackrabbits were swarming in the alfalfa. Honest John addressed a word of inquiry to Welden.

"You've forgotten," Welden said. "The Pit Carnaval gang came in here and killed old Pop Duncan and his wife. Della, the only child, cashed in on her cattle—sold every head and all the mules and horses, and went to town. The Rangers haven't caught the band yet."

Honest John looked southward. His glance was sidelong, doubtful, changeful. He swung his gaze around the horizon. Toward the north he saw something. It was a streak of white cloud, reaching fast across the sky. Emmet Welden saw his glance. The chauffeur lighted a cigaret indifferently.

In ten minutes the north sky had darkened, turned leaden. Within an hour the storm broke. The gale swept down out of the hills; the water splashed in the dust. Rivulets, preceded by miniature mud waves, rolled down the sloping earth. Yellow cascades showed through the white downpour of sparkling rain.

All day, all night and till noon the following day the storm raged. It filled the land with thunders and lightnings. It filled all the hollows. It overflowed even in the hearts of the men marooned at the ranch. Happily, Welden had stocked the car with rations and they did not grow hungry. After twenty-four hours the sky suddenly lightened. The leaden clouds drifted away, leaving a flock of white, woolly tufts in dark, clear blue. On all sides, in every direction, torrent and river of water poured brick red toward the deep valley of the Rio Grande. And, visibly, the outrush grew less and less. The roar subsided. Night fell on a troubled earth that was growing more quiet and less disturbed after that eight inch fall of rain.

HONEST John Field knew storms, but not a desert cloudburst. He thrilled to it. He rejoiced in it. He did not care if he must wait for days while mud dried up enough to carry his car and till the last ford was low enough for him to drive across. He went out, when every step loaded his boots with lumps of red clay. He loved this terrific land. He owned a hundred square miles of it. He smiled even at the jackrabbits that were eating his alfalfa.

When on the third day he emerged at dawn to view his possession, he was nonplused. He saw the land, but it had changed. The red and tawny, the wet and

muddy had suddenly turned green. He saw colors that were fresh. He smelled a fragrance that increased. Even as he looked, he saw shades take the place of desert hues. When he looked more closely, he realized that seeds long dormant had instantly swelled, sprouted and become foliage and blossoms. He saw the naked land clothe itself with flowers. By sundown his barren waste was no more. It was all clothed in green. He saw the jackrabbits deserting the alfalfa to romp off across the hills and valleys. They were going out to vary their diet. He saw on a distant hill a dark spot. His eyes knew a cow when he saw it. From somewhere, magically, cattle were coming to graze.

"Hey," he said to Welden, "I want some cattle to fatten!"

They backed the automobile out of the garage to start, a day too soon, for the Border pavement that ended west of them. Old Honest John had the cattle fever. He would not wait.

They made ten miles in five hours. They toiled up a slope—and from behind stone and mesquite stepped five men.

"Hup!" one demanded, and Honest John, Welden and the chauffeur threw their hands in the air.

"Good God—Pit Carnaval!" the real estate agent gasped, stricken with fear.

On the instant the leader of the bandit gang turned cold, fish-white eyes at the unfortunate whose involuntary exclamation had disclosed recognition. Under that dark scrutiny, Welden stiffened. He was in the face of death. The scoundrel bandit would kill him, would kill both the men with him, for dead men tell no tales. These pirate riders of desert desolation kept that rule inviolate. None must know that Pit Carnaval had in the storm slipped across the Border.

A mongrel's grin, mirthless as the unswerving smile of the rattlesnake, whipped across Pit's face. He gave a nod and the three men were crowded toward the Rio Grande's quicksands and wet, quick gravels. Prodded by rifle muzzles, the three were driven toward that flow of water, mud and sand. The sun in its cloudless sky emphasized the loneliness of the uninhabited wastes of that flowering desert of quick flowers and slow mesquite and cactus.

Even in that moment of utter peril, Emmet Welden glanced at Honest John Field, wondering if the old, grim looking farmer realized the fate that was now inevitable. The old man met the glance. Welden saw in those intrepid eyes a regret and understanding beyond measure. He was unafraid. He could die, facing murder in cold, contemptuous scorn. But he knew, now, his own foolish pride, his own weak yielding to what others off yonder—those who could, perhaps, never understand—might be thinking about Texas, grinning at a Texas auto license.

So they trotted and scrambled down the slopes with feet crushing newly spread flowers and the soft foliage around them. They zigzagged, in utter helplessness, toward the depths of the quicksand. Thus they came to a cluster of cottonwoods, where the flooded Rio Grande had wet a level bottom of a few acres. And there with a sudden rush of hoofs on small stones, a violent, merciless, utterly reckless rider came charging down a hillside bringing a small avalanche with him.

It was such a surprising demonstration in the desert silence that Pit Carnaval and his gang, tense with cruel determination, suddenly cringed with surprise. The three captives turned, curiously emotionless, at an interruption so unexpected.

They saw a slender, boyish figure. His breast was clad in leather colored sheepskin, cut like a waistcoat, but rather long. His arms were sleeved with a wool Army shirt to his wrists. He wore leather chaps. His horse was lank, long, tall, full of Kentucky breeding and desert verve. His hat was lifted at the brim by the breeze of his approach. His left hand held limp reins and his right hand held forward, eagerly, hopefully, expectantly and even joyously, a black revolver that despite all the leaps and bounds, all the shivers and muscle play of horse and balanced man, did not deviate a hair's

breadth from aiming straight at the heart of Pit Carnaval.

In the left center of the buttoned sheepskin jacket was a tiny sparkle—silver or nickel white metal—a pretty mark to shoot at, perhaps— Not for the past fifty years has any one really had that notion.

"Ranger!" Pit Carnaval whispered, and the bending of his knees lessened his height by not less than three inches.

From his hands fell two cocked revolvers. Ere they had reached the sands under the cottonwoods, the other weapons of the little party were falling, too, carbines and automatic pistols and one long, shining knife which had been drawn —for business.

The rider slipped forward off the horse.

"Huh!" he said, and put handcuffs, slender wires of steel, on the several bandit wrists.

When this young, agile and overwhelming person had made sure and fast the security of the bandits, he turned to look at the real estate agent and the ranch buyer. They were breathing deep, long breaths. One was leaning rather wilted against a cottonwood. The other stood tall and lank, grim and stolid, gazing at the apparition.

The Ranger blinked and looked away. He wet his lips. He raised first one high heeled foot, then the other. He turned his toes in. His shoulders fairly crawled. He looked about like a seventeen year old boy, completely embarrassed.

"Howdy, Tom," the elderly man said.

"Hello, Uncle John!" the young man replied, with a stammer in his voice.

Two men, who perhaps might have had a thousand things to say, expressed all that was to be said between them in the salute. A half minute later Tom Field motioned the prisoners back up the trail they had lately come down. At the automobile, which was long and wide, all hands climbed aboard. Then, with the horse coming after, they rolled on some dozen or so miles to a ranch where Tom left the horse and hung up the saddle.

They stopped much farther beyond and turned down to a cluster of inconspicuous buildings in the irrigated bottoms. The road was dry, even dusty, off the concrete. The cloudburst had not come that far west.

"Hello, Tom!" Captain Caile greeted the young man, looking over the prisoners.

Tom pulled his heels together, straightened his back and jerked his hand up in rigid salute. The real estate agent saw that Honest John Field lifted a foot nervously. The old man looked doubtfully at the captain. The captain of the Rangers gave him no glance.

"Cap'n," Honest John said softly, "may I use your telephone?"

"Yes," Caille assented curtly.

But as the old man went toward the office, the real estate agent saw the captain and the Ranger exchange one of the most meaning glances ever traded on the Border. And when, a few minutes later, Honest John emerged and walked up to Captain Caile, the old man was embarrassed and determined in his bearing.

"Captain," he said, "I just heard from the capital—"

"Yes?" Caile inquired, as the old man hesitated.

"Yes. There was a bill there to abolish the Rangers. Huh! They decided to refer it back to the committee. It'll be killed."

"Uh-huh!" Captain Caile shrugged his shoulders with the most elaborate indifference imaginable. "Dinner's most ready, Mr. Field, such as it is. Perhaps you'd like to sit in with us?"

Honest John Field looked away for a moment.

"I'm proud to!" he exclaimed, with sudden overwhelming feeling.

THEN they all sat in and up, elderly men and young men, tall men and short men, all kinds of men, except dishonest and cowardly men, to eat the beans and meat, the bread and wild honey, drinking strong coffee all the while.

"And, Captain!" Honest John Field interrupted the silence after a time, "I've bought the Duncan ranch."

"A good one!" Caile nodded. "It'll fat ten thousand head in two months now—strong grass, you know."

"I know. I saw it growing. But I'm not going to keep it. Blame me, I ain't! My boy there—Tom and his wife—"

"He isn't married!" Caile exclaimed, as wide grins increased the young man's clay-red embarrassment.

"He's going to be," Honest John said gravely, "and the only people in the world I'd let have the privilege of that ranch are him and his wife."

"My Gawd, Uncle John!" Tom gasped, "I never asked—"

"That's all right, my boy," the old man, one of the bossiest in the land, remarked gravely, "I'm going up to ask her, for you. You'll introduce me, won't you, Welden?"

"I'll sure do it!" The real estate agent grinned. "But I bet Tom'll have to ask for himself, at that!"

"We'll see!" Honest John said.

In a thousand ways Honest John might be stubborn and have a chance of being mistaken. But he knew his average of being right was high. When Della Duncan looked at him, she saw a kindly, gentle, deferential face, the sweetest expression imaginable, and a hope so deep and earnest she could not even think of denying him any request he might make.

"You see," he explained, "I want you to be my niece. I want to have you in our family. I want you to be happy and make Tom happy; make up for the time he thought his old uncle would never get to understand there are more ways than one of standing up for and serving his people, other ways of being a credit to his State than in growing foodstuffs or building roads, digging oil wells, or being just useful. You see, I lived in the Central Gardens spot. I belonged there. I still am at my best there. That was all I knew about Texas, for it's too big for one man to know. When you called my ignorance and dragged me out of my fences and narrowness, and I followed the trail of blossoms, my soul, but I'd never believed the sights I saw! I saw the big pasture, and the Duncan rancho, with the cattle range all stripped bare. I want you to go back. I don't know cows. You pick five thousand head to build up your herd again."

"Uncle John!" she exclaimed. "That's why I really sold out. If you wouldn't take the land, I was going to stock up with Gillette Curly Rumps and other highgrade ups."

"You weren't quitting, then?"

"No, indeedy!" She laughed. "I don't reckon they'd come a-raiding my place any more'n they do Gillettes or any of those other places run by former Rangers. I reckon they do!"

"Then you just were running a blazer on me in passing?" He grinned.

"Thought you didn't know cattle!" She laughed. "But I sure did intend to put our brands on you, Mr. Man, taking away our Rangers!"

"And I'm obliged to you for teaching me how big Texas is," he said. "May I use your telephone?"

"Yes, indeedy!"

Honest John Fields told central to give him Captain Caile's Ranger camp, as soon as the Lord allowed—and haste to reach a Ranger camp, always meaning business, like calls to fire stations and police headquarters wherever telephone centrals sit at the keyboards, naturally has right of way.

"That you, Cap'n Caile?"

"Sure is," Caile answered. "'Low that's the voice of Mr. Fields."

"Mister be damned!" the old Texas farmer declared with emphasis. "This is Uncle John—is of Ranger Tom Fields, going to be of Della Duncan, and more especially of the Texas Rangers, if you get the idea, Captain."

"I do, Uncle John," the Ranger exclaimed. "And I know a whole lot of the boys who are going to sure be plumb proud, too."

"They don't need to be, nor have to be," the old man said, "but you can tell 'em for me, there's an old man who's sure proud of his nephews, blood and adopted, both—and all."

And two great men chuckled in unison.

"A SHUT mouth, mind you, Ruthven. That's what this berth I'm talkin' about needs, and if you're good at it, there's no reason why I can't put you in as mate of the *Moresby Trader*."

Harrap spoke with an oozing slyness. His bony face was thrust forward, and his puckered eyes were fixed eagerly on the younger man, who stood silhouetted against the brilliant sun which struck across the stone doorway of Sin Yat Yuan's ship chandler's shop on the Reina Mole on the Binondo side of the Pasig River.

Harrap was talking from the musty gloom where the shadows of jungle-like festoons of old rope hung from the ceiling timbers. In that half light, darker than it really was in contrast to the tropical glare on the river outside, Ruthven caught the note of cunning in Harrap's voice, and the necessity the former boatswain felt for seeking the gloomy cavern of the shop.

"It's been nine years since I sailed with you, Harrap," said Ruthven, speaking quietly. "I was only a ship's boy then, but I knew how to mind my own business. If there's something mysterious about this voyage, and—"

"That's the word!" broke in Harrap. "Now and then, workin' for the chink here, somethin' fat comes my way. Mysterious! With ships, that always means rich pickin', don't it Ruthven?" He moved out a little into the light, as if he felt surer of his ground with the young man.

"Rich picking—or jail, Harrap," said Ruthven. "I'm hard up for a ship, but I don't fancy bars around my bunk." He laughed lightly, as if he sought to dilute his words of offense by turning them into a joke.

Harrap charged out from the shadows of the old ropes and took Ruthven by the shoulders.

"Don't you go and be a damned fool, just because you've got your mate's ticket!" He uttered the words with a show of ferocity, but with a restraint which turned them into caution based on personal confidence. "Just look at the whole business," he went on, with hasty urging. "It's Captain Saleeby who's behind this! Saleeby, senior skipper of the Red Top Funnel line. Forty years he's been with that line, Ruthven. And with a pension starin' him in the face, he walks out on his owners in Sydney, comes up here to Manila and buys a schooner, and asks me to pick up a crew. Think a man of that sort's chancin' jail? No! He's got a line on somethin' fat, and he needs a mate for his *Moresby Trader*. Bound for Sydney, he says. My eye! He could ha' bought a schooner in Sydney cheaper than he got the *Moresby Trader* here. What he don't want Sydney to know is where he's goin', and that's the answer."

Ruthven waited before he replied. Harrap, rawboned face thrust close to the young mate's chin, studied him. Ruthven's straw hat was pushed back. Thick light hair that needed the barber bordered his face in a tangle. His clean,

SALEEBY'S TREASURE

A Novelette of the South Seas

By CAPTAIN FREDERICK MOORE

neatly pressed suit of gray crash was not a good fit, and told those in the know that it was out of a second hand shop in Calle Rosario.

"Maybe Captain Saleeby's taken a notion to skipper a ship of his own," he suggested. "Most of us have that dream—as I have. I know I'd like to have my own deck under my feet."

Harrap's squinting eyes flamed with a greedy glitter.

"Now's your chance. Ship with the old skipper, watch your tongue, and listen to me. This one voyage, and when we're ashore again out of the *Moresby Trader* you'll have a pay day under your belt that'll make you an owner."

"You're going—back to sea?" demanded Ruthven, frankly startled. "Quitting as boss here for Sin Yat, a good shore job?"

"Damned whistlin' I am! I knows a good thing when I see it. And what's good enough for me, Ruthven, you ought to jump at."

"I've had a bad break," admitted Ruthven. "I'm pretty flat. A man on his beefbones in this port needs a keel with water under it, so if I could get back on my feet—"

Harrap broke in.

"I'm goin' bosun in the *Moresby Trader*—and you're mate of her. Old Saleeby's got one foot in the grave, but he'll most likely last long enough to find what he's goin' on the look for." He winked with energy.

"Eh? You mean he's sick?"

Harrap gave a sidewise jerk of his closely barbered head.

"He's so thin the light goes through him like it does through them shell panes in the shutters. And so weak he's staggerin' on his pins now and then. And if he slips his cable after he's got what he's goin' to hunt—when we've found it—who's in charge? You—and me, Ruthven."

Before Ruthven could answer there came a loud bang from the rear of the long room. Startled, both men turned that way. Harrap half raised his hand as he swung round, as if preparing to check Ruthven.

"Them damned rats again," he explained quickly. "Place is fair alive with 'em; so big they fight the cats."

But Ruthven's thoughts had already returned to his prospects of employment.

"So Saleeby's quit the Red Top Funnel service, has he, and bought a schooner out of his savings?" The question was more in the nature of thinking aloud than expecting Harrap to answer.

"Ten thousand hard earned dollars!" declared Harrap. "Do you think he's gone back to sail for his health, or some silly notion? Not him. At his age he ought to be quittin' the sea for good. He ain't hankerin' for a sea life any more than I am. A sick old man buying a schooner!"

"Is she looking for a freight?" asked Ruthven.

Harrap waved both hands.

"He's not askin' a single broker to find a cargo for him. An eight hundred ton

vessel, and he's clearing in ballast—for Sydney."

"That does sound queer," admitted Ruthven. "To buy here and sail light. Certainly he could load something, even if he only paid his crew out of it."

Harrap's voice was turned low again in an excess of confidence. "Crew, yes. He could sail with natives—and he tells me to get white men. His order was to get white men who need work most, and the stores he's put aboard show that he intends to feed like a liner, when dried fish and rice would serve for natives. And a black cook going along, name of Jackson, who's been with him for years. Now tell me there ain't somethin' in the wind, Mister."

Ruthven nodded.

"Decent of him to crew with whites down on their luck, where native seamen are cheap."

Harrap laughed harshly.

"Think he's gone in for an orphan's home, eh? Well, I ain't fooled none, Ruthven. Hungry men don't ask too many questions. Didn't I tell you it was a shut mouth berth? Can you twig that much? Saleeby told me he didn't want waterfront gossip, so he comes to me to crew him. *And* he's sailing without a dollar of insurance."

Ruthven pricked up his ears at that.

"Why should he carry his own risk?" he asked.

Harrap winked again.

"Because he doesn't want to answer any questions of the underwriters. He's got no cargo, but he's got somethin' in his hold that was loaded from a *lorcha* by native stevedores. It's under battened hatches, put aboard all covered with old 'paulins. Most I can make of it is tanks, or maybe a big float. Men who done the loadin' before I had any hand in this business with Saleeby, they've lost their tongues, and swallowed the gold that plugged their gullets."

"Harrap, it begins to look good to me," said Ruthven. "And I'm in on it, because whatever it is, I've heard enough of Captain Saleeby to know it'd be nothing—"

"Now you're talkin'!" burst out Harrap joyfully, grasping Ruthven's hand. "Nothin' to sneeze at, whatever he's goin' for. He's said nothin' about extra wages, but I've sailed with him years ago, and from what he's dropped, casual-like, we'll all git a bite out of it bigger'n we look for. Not that he's dropped a hint, mind—but I savvy enough to shove off from my job here and take my chances. And I like to see you with the sense to know I'm puttin' you in the way of some fat, because—"

THE SHARP warnings of an automobile horn sliced into the jumble of sounds coming from loading vessels along the embankment. Both Harrap and Ruthven made for the door to look out, and through the swarm of native and Chinese workers they saw a taxicab a few yards away, weaving in and out, demanding clearance with its horn.

Harrap, in his shirtsleeves, straw slippers on his feet, took one hasty glance.

"That's Saleeby now!"

He filled the stone doorway with his square figure, while Ruthven looked over his shoulder. He saw a thin hand on an open window of the cab, and as it rolled up the cobbled street and stopped before the door, a face appeared—a thin, weather beaten face peering out to make sure that the cab had arrived at the proper place.

It was Captain Saleeby. When Harrap had opened the cab door and deferentially greeted the old skipper, he steadied himself with a hand on Harrap's shoulder, and stepped out. As he entered the ship chandler's shop, he took off his soft hat. He walked slowly, with something of weariness in the uncertainty of his legs. He did not proceed as far as the chair, which Harrap sought to direct him to, but suddenly seated himself on a pair of rusty bitts and fanned his face with the hat. He wore loose pongee clothes. He was a man of fatherly aspect, his lower jaw covered with a short, sparse beard that was almost white. His blue eyes had

a tired kindliness in them as he looked across at Ruthven.

"Cap'n," Harrap began, still with his overpolite air and tone, "here's a bit of luck, you wantin' a mate. This is Mr. Ruthven, mate of the *Orinoco Lady*. She was ripped open on a reef in the San Bernardino Straits a few days back when she dropped her propeller off in a blow of wind."

Captain Saleeby smiled, and the lines of time and stress that were cut into his face showed clearly. But there was no grimness about the old man.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Heard of it—and I've heard that the inspectors cleared you, Mr. Ruthven."

Ruthven smiled back at the veteran skipper.

"I got away with a pair of trousers and my sextant, sir. I don't look much like a ship's officer in this rig, but all the money I had in the world was in the ship's safe." He shrugged.

"Any steamer with better than fourteen fathoms of water over her has stopped producing wages, too," said Saleeby. "At your age, a thing like that's a tragedy, Mr. Ruthven, unless you realize that there's plenty more money in the world."

"Not on the beach, sir, for me," replied Ruthven.

"You don't have to stay on the beach unless you want to, young man. My *Moresby Trader's* out in the bay at anchor."

"Thank you, sir," said Ruthven. "I've told Harrap here that I'd be proud to ship with you. I'm a stranger to you, of course, but—"

"Known him since he was a kid, ten years back, Cap'n," broke in Harrap hastily. "We was in the old *Hildegarde* together. I've swallered the anchor, and he's got mate's papers. He's the man for you, sir."

Captain Saleeby observed his new mate with interest.

"Your word's good enough for me, Harrap; and the cut of his jib backs up your word. That's settled."

Harrap was pleased.

"Grabbed him the minute he showed up, sir," he went on. "I know he can be depended on, just as you can depend on me, sir."

"What's been done about the crew?" asked Saleeby. "Got men who need a ship, and who'll appreciate a good berth?"

Harrap thrust his thumbs under his red suspenders.

"Five all lined up, and more comin', sir. Been havin' a hard time, and seein' they been on pretty thin grub, they ain't showy, as you might say. But all solid men and good seamen, sir."

"Don't bother with any more," said Saleeby. "I'm sending others aboard." He turned to Ruthven. "Got a family, Mister?"

Ruthven colored.

"Not yet, sir. My plans are laid, though. I mean, I'm engaged—and that's why the loss of my savings makes it hard. But the girl don't mind, so long as I got out alive."

"And she's right." Captain Saleeby's look strayed out to the nearby river, his eyes thoughtful. He went on, as if talking to himself, "Engaged—to a girl back home—and no bridge to walk! That's hard lines, Mr. Ruthven, for a young man with a mate's ticket out in these waters." He swung his eyes to Ruthven again and regarded him closely.

"I can't call it hard lines, sir, to get a berth with you."

Saleeby smiled, a little wistfully.

"Were the inspectors a bit rough with you?"

"No, sir, they gave me the best of it in every way. We lost our propeller, you know, and—"

"Yes, I know," broke in the old skipper grimly. "But inspectors don't give you jobs, and owners prefer mates who've been lucky, as you'll find out. Your last ship under water's not the best thing to talk about in owner's offices when you're looking for mate's wages. But as I've just turned owner, and you'll sail with me, I'll give you a leg-up on a fresh start."

"I appreciate your attitude, sir," said Ruthven. "I don't want to lose time, under the circumstances."

"I was thinking of the girl back home myself," said Saleeby, the same little smile playing about his mouth. "You'll be going back to sail, from steam, and being mate of the schooner *Moresby Trader* won't sound so important to the girl back home, after being chief in a big steamer."

"Captain Saleeby, I wouldn't go back to sail with the average skipper or owner. I'm a stranger to you, sir, but you're no stranger to me—anyhow, by reputation. I'd rather have a berth with you, sir, than be chief in the biggest tramp steamer out in these waters."

Saleeby smiled.

"I'm a pretty average skipper, Mr. Ruthven, and as for being owner, it's something new with me. And I'm too old a man to build up a fleet. So don't build any hopes on what I can do for your future. I don't want to mislead you in any way—I'm retiring from the sea, to tell the truth."

Harrap caught Ruthven's eye. Between the two there passed the thought that buying schooners was not the usual way of retiring from sea life; besides, both knew that Saleeby might have retired from the Red Top Funnel line in a few more months with a pension. But Ruthven knew better than to raise such a question with his new employer. The young mate hesitated on what to say next, and Harrap, gifted with a mental agility for awkward situations as well as skill in discussing shady transactions without disclosing the underlying illegality, said:

"It's his reppytation, Mr. Ruthven's talkin' about, sir. It'd do him a lot of good to have a discharge from you, when he comes to go back to steam, sir. You ain't never had any accidents, in your history, Cap'n Saleeby."

"No, that's right," said Saleeby, a trace of weariness in his voice. "My name has never been associated with any sea disaster. I've been a careful man—or a lucky one." He smiled a trifle wistfully. "The name of Saleeby will go off the sea when I take my last departure, while other skippers will live in the records with famous marine disasters. No losses for owners makes a man sleep easy nights. If a skipper wants to make his mark on sea history these days, the best thing he can do is lose a thousand passengers—then everybody knows who he is when his name's mentioned. I never wanted that kind of sea fame."

"That's the point I was trying to make, sir," said Ruthven promptly. "Harrap touched it, and I feel the same way about it—a discharge from you, Captain Saleeby, when the time comes to pay me off—if I've suited you—will look good to most owners when I need my next ship after the *Moresby Trader*."

"Then let it go at that," said Saleeby. He turned thoughtful for a minute, then went on. "I'll try and make it worth your while to serve me while I need you, Mr. Ruthven. I can't promise much, but before you're paid off, I doubt if you'll have to worry about the savings that went down with the *Orinoco Lady*—or your future." He stood up, as if he desired to close the subject.

Harrap shot a glance at Ruthven that seemed to say, "I told you so." But aloud, and servile as ever, he said to Saleeby in nervous haste—

"Your longboat's up at the landin' steps, sir, and unless you're goin' to use that cab outside you'd better pay it off, or the bill—"

"I'll keep the cab," said Saleeby. "We'll want to stop at the custom house a minute, and Mr. Ruthven, I take it, will want to pick up some sea gear on his advance. We'll sail before sundown, so have the men up at the shipping commissioner's office in two hours. I've already spoken for the tugboat."

"Very good, sir," said Harrap. "We'll all be ready."

"Come on, Mr. Ruthven," said the captain, making for the door. "You can ride with me in that mine sweeper outside and collect your dunnage."

Ruthven turned to grasp Harrap's hand in appreciation of what the elder man had done for him. Then the mate hurried out and helped the captain into the taxicab.

HARRAP stood on the stone sill and watched them make a poor course along the cargo piled mole, the horn demanding a clear channel from coolies working with bales and casks. And when he saw the cab pass out of sight into one of the narrow streets near the Binondo Canal, Harrap hurriedly went to the back of the shop, fumbled in the gloom for a knob and opened a door.

After the sun glare of the street the rear room was so dim he could barely see the five men who were gathered about a small table. At sight of him their ragged heads lifted and swayed—like hungry wolves waiting for expected food. As Harrap shut himself in with them he saw the whites of their eyes through the light coming from a shell paned shutter high overhead.

"We're sailin' before sundown," reported Harrap. "You'll need to git shaved up quick—and in proper duds. I'll hand out the cash. The back street." He counted out some money on the table.

"Was that Saleeby out there?" asked a gruff voice.

"Yes, and a mate that's ours. I put him on. He knows me. He'll listen to what I tell him aboard."

"How much does he know?" asked another.

"Enough to make his mouth water."

"You're the smooth 'un, 'Arrap," commended a small man. "But wot does 'e think?"

Harrap waved a reassuring hand.

"What do I care what he thinks, Eccles? He's goin', and I can handle him."

"Leffler was sayin' a bit back," remarked the gruff one, "that this mate of yourn might git too thick with the Old Man—and you'll be left in the cold when it comes to findin' out much when we want to know. He means after we've sailed."

"Well, I ain't askin' you nor Leffler to help me pick a mate, Johnny. Ruthven's not likely to pass up his bite in a fortune to please somebody that's cheatin' the undertaker ashore."

"I hear the skipper say some men he send to the sheep," put in a dark haired little man at the far end of the table.

"So you was listenin', was you, Lopez? Well, we don't need to give a damn who he's sent. Saleeby may have a gun, but most likely he won't. Anyhow, the extra men he's shipped won't be heeled for a fight. We'll be the boys runnin' that schooner—and here's what we'll run it with."

Harrap set upon the table a box and pulled from it a piece of dirty canvas, revealing a double row of big automatic pistols. They were new, and the blued metal of the dozen weapons was smeared with oil.

"Army stuff," he went on, as the five men rose and looked into the box. "It's only because of my job here with Sin Yat Yuan I can lay my hands on this line of goods in Manila. So you can see that we're all set to help old Saleeby find what he's goin' after."

With a laugh, he put the canvas back over the box.

II

STEADILY southing before the light winds of the dying northeast monsoon, the *Moresby Trader* was nine days out from Manila. The sky was brilliant, the sea fairly smooth but flecked with white under the first good sailing breeze since the schooner had left port. The watch on deck was busily painting the inner sides of the bulwarks, while Harrap mixed paint on the fore-hatch.

So far there had been nothing to indicate that the vessel was bound for anywhere but Sydney, the port for which she had cleared. But Ruthven had discovered Captain Saleeby to be a navigator who sought the greatest possible accuracy in his observations; he kept close track of compass error and was constantly checking on variation. At night he took star sights, and was poring constantly over the chart.

As the days passed the Old Man's "fixes" became increasingly important,

and the course was always changed a point or so after every noon observation. The mate realized that a vessel without cargo, making a passage for Sydney, was suspiciously concerned with a matter of a mile or two more or less of longitude. And, on the morning of the eighth day, a man had been ordered aloft to keep a lookout for breakers.

Up to that time, though the course had shown a shoal of "Existence Doubtful" breakers under the bows of the *Moresby Trader*, Ruthven had assumed that Captain Saleeby would want to avoid the danger ahead. But the skipper was steering for the shoal—with a hand in the fore-crosstrees to watch for broken water. Harrap and the crew had grinned widely the morning before when they heard the order for that lookout.

The noon position of the ninth day, with the line on the chart drawn with pencil showing the course steered, revealed the fact that the *Moresby Trader* had sailed over the charted shoal.

Ruthven stood by the wheelbox, while Saleeby paced the weather side. He had just come up from an examination of the chart, after another careful checking of the noon "fix" which had just been worked up a half an hour before. Eccles, the cockney, one of the seamen who had been brought aboard by Harrap, was at the wheel. Galten was the man aloft.

Presently the old skipper approached Ruthven and spoke quietly. And it seemed to Ruthven that the ears of Eccles quivered with eagerness to catch every word.

"We've overrun that shoal, Mister," said Saleeby. "I don't wonder the Hydrographic Office regards its existence as doubtful. Of course, in light winds like this it wouldn't break."

"No, sir," agreed Ruthven. "It'd be hard to find, unless the rock or reef happened to be awash. We're well clear of it, if it's anywhere near the spot the chart puts it, so we don't need to worry about it, sir."

Saleeby smiled.

"No, I'm not worried about it. I'm glad enough, though, it isn't here."

Ruthven turned and looked at the old skipper, a little surprised. It occurred to Ruthven that one of the best ways to avoid a shoal considered dangerous was to give it a wide berth, instead of laying a course that would bring it under a vessel's keel if the chart happened to be accurate. But the mate was careful not to raise a point which might be regarded as criticism. Instead, he suggested—

"Perhaps, sir, you won't want a man aloft from now on."

"I'm looking for that Existence Doubtful shoal, Mister," said Saleeby quietly. "So put her on the port tack, and we'll run to the east'ard and see if we can pick it up."

Ruthven, amazed, knew that at last Harrap was right. Captain Saleeby was not bound for Sydney. So as the mate moved forward to the break of the deck and called out sharply, "Stand by to go about!" he knew that there was excitement in his voice.

Harrap leaped to his feet from the forehatch and repeated the order. And his voice held more than excitement; it was a cry of joy from the boatswain, a triumphant assertion to all hands that his gossip and theories were proven true at last. The men leaped for the sheets and the boom tackles. Almost at once it was "Hard a-lee!" and the *Moresby Trader* was filling away on her new tack, the wind almost abeam. Then Captain Saleeby went below again.

Harrap managed at once to find some trifling job that drew him back to the quarterdeck. He ranged himself alongside Ruthven, who stood by the mizzen rigging.

"Well, sir," began Harrap, with a satisfied grin, "how about Sydney now? Expect to make it as a landfall somewheres over by the coast of Palawan?"

"This beats me, Bosun," admitted Ruthven. "You knew what you were talking about back in Manila."

"Thought it was bally moonshine, didn't ye?" ventured Harrap.

Ruthven nodded.

"Yes. And it got smokier as we held our course for port, too. I couldn't see anything much in ordering a man aloft to look for breakers, but—"

"Breakers in the middle of the South China Sea!" scoffed Harrap.

"Yes, but the chart showed broken water ahead," insisted Ruthven. "An Existence Doubtful bank or reef—reported years ago."

Harrap's bony face showed that he was puzzled.

"But we didn't come up to it, eh? That's queer."

Ruthven explained that it was not properly placed on the chart.

"And," he went on, "I'm telling you no secret, because the skipper doesn't seem to care who knows about it. Eccles, at the wheel, heard every word."

"What in hell're we eastin' for, then?" demanded Harrap.

"To pick up that shoal we should've made sometime before noon."

Harrap sucked in his breath swiftly.

"Hah!" he exclaimed. "So he wants that shoal, hey? You know what that means, Mister?" He shut one eye and kept it shut, while his face betrayed his joy and his greed.

"I? Know what it means?" Ruthven was startled.

Harrap wiped his hands on his canvas trousers, chuckling all the while.

"Well, *don't* you?" he demanded.

Ruthven could only stare at the boatswain.

"I can't say that I do for certain, Harrap."

The boatswain jammed his painty hands into his trouser pockets and spraddled his legs out importantly.

"*I* do! It's all like I told you at the first go-off in Sin Yat's place. Quittin' the Red Top Line, buyin' this schooner, askin' for a white crew, and sailin' empty —for Sydney! Sydney hell! Is traversin' round out in these waters, with a fair wind for Sydney, lookin' for a shoal? Well, you ain't fooled, Ruthven, no more'n I be."

"That's all very well," admitted Ruthven, "but what's he looking for that shoal for?"

Harrap gave the young mate a searching glance.

"Ain't you heard the Old Man say anything that you could make a wide guess on?"

Ruthven shook his head.

"I don't know any more than you do."

"Saleeby's been pretty tight lipped, hey?"

"I don't see why he should tell me his private business," retorted Ruthven.

Harrap's face reddened, and he spoke with renewed earnestness.

"He can't make no secret of what he's after, as long's we're headin' down for that shoal. If he finds it, he won't have no more private business."

RUTHVEN nodded assent. The conversation was going beyond the limits which he had expected. The mate did not like Harrap's way of putting things in regard to Captain Saleeby's purposes.

"No, he can't keep much private," he agreed, "unless he locates what he's looking for—and then pulls out again."

"You think that's the way he intends?" asked Harrap.

"I've no way to judge as to that."

Harrap considered for a minute. He was beginning to show signs of ill humor. But he brightened again swiftly.

"Well, it'd hardly be pearls, o' course. Not out here, it ain't likely. But I'll bet, whatever it is, he'll have to dive for it, and if I don't miss my guess, it's gear for divin' he's got in the hold."

"What gear do you mean?"

"That stuff loaded out of *lorchas*, lookin' like a boiler. It was covered with 'paulins. He didn't bring that along, without intendin' to break it out and use it, and that don't mean that he'll pull out, like you said, after he locates the shoal."

Now Ruthven turned and gazed straight at the boatswain.

"What the devil do you think he'd be diving for if not pearl shell?"

Harrap waited to increase the effect of

what he was going to say. Then he announced with startling certainty—

"Gold."

"Gold!" ejaculated Ruthven. "You can't mean that."

Harrap sucked his teeth importantly.

"You heard what I said. There's something on that shoal he's huntin'—somethin' under water. He didn't bring a dozen soundin' leads for the fun of havin' extra gear aboard."

"What's that?" demanded Ruthven, keeping his voice down. "A dozen hand leads?"

"Aye. We've got boatwork ahead." Harrap turned wary eyes toward the open skylight abaft of where they stood. He went on, a confidential hand on Ruthven's arm, "It's a wreck he's got a line on —some ship probably from Australia years ago, in the gold rush days, with a ton of dust aboard in her safe."

Ruthven gave a low whistle.

"What if an old sailor, who got away alive years ago, and kept his mouth shut, told the Old Man? More than one gold ship was lost with all hands, or reported so. Or what if it was a Spanisher from Mexico, a couple of hundred years past, loaded with silver bars. But him throwin' up a command, runnin' out of Sydney as he was, it's my guess that he's picked up a bit of gossip about one of the clipper ships—and that's why I say gold."

"But we're hardly equipped for salvage work," objected Ruthven when he had thought for a minute.

He had sensed in Harrap's attitude an assumption that between mate and boatswain there was something of an understanding which made Captain Saleeby an outsider. And what Ruthven wanted was the extent of Harrap's knowledge—and his future purposes.

"I'll bet an eye there's patent divin' gear aboard," insisted Harrap.

"But we've no divers, Bosun."

Harrap winked.

"Saleeby brought four men aboard—Kerr, Galten, Smith and Svensen. Can you say some of 'em ain't divers?"

"Maybe you're right," conceded Ruthven. "I hadn't thought of 'em that way."

Harrap lifted his shoulders and threw out his hands.

"I've sounded 'em and not one'll admit he's ever been under water. But the Old Man would prime 'em to keep a hush on *that*. But 've you ever looked close-like at that squarehead, Svensen?"

"Close? I don't understand—"

"Little red veins around his nose and under his eyes. I've met him before, somewhere ashore, and I'll go you ten to one he was a diver with Captain Garry when Garry raised the old *Pharsalia*. Saleeby sent him aboard on the quiet, and when I clapped eyes on Svensen, I could swear I'd seen him on some salvage job."

"You may be right," agreed Ruthven. Now he was getting at information which was proof that Harrap knew more than he had told ashore. "It may be a pearl bank after all that we're after. But Saleeby would pick up luggers and divers at Thursday Island if—"

"Thursday Island be damned!" declared the boatswain. "The whole pearlin' fleet would be hangin' to his tail—Japs and so on—if he started with luggers from Thursday Island. This business is under cover, so Saleeby starts from Manila, with gear smuggled under hatches and divers hid in the crew. He didn't want the waterfront to break out in a rash. The skipper's a wise old codger. There's likely divin' pumps and gear in the lazaret, buried under spare sails. I've time to find out what—" He broke off suddenly, as if he had said enough.

"Whatever it is we'll know before long, if we pick up that shoal," said Ruthven. He turned aft, as a hint that he thought it was time they quit talking.

Harrap clutched again at the mate's arm. "Tip me off on the first you find out," he urged.

Ruthven nodded and drew away. But before Harrap had gone down to the main deck there was a cry from Galten, who was on lookout aloft.

"Breakers! Broad on the port bow!"

Ruthven stepped to the companion hood and called below sharply.

"Breakers reported from aloft, sir!"

Saleeby hurried on deck.

"Bring her by the wind, Mister, and we'll run down to 'em. Send a leadsman to the fore chains! We'll anchor as soon as we've got bottom. You might have a look from aloft yourself."

Calling the orders to Harrap, Ruthven went into the mizzen rigging with his binoculars. About every ninth swell there was a line of white crested water, and the jade sheen of the sunlight striking through the curve of the lifting wave before it broke.

"You'd have to be on it before you'd see it, unless in typhoon weather, sir," Ruthven reported, as he reached the deck again.

Captain Saleeby, joyfully smiling, was pacing back and forth.

"Hope we don't get a typhoon before we're done here," he remarked. "But send word to Galten to keep a close watch ahead, so we won't pile up on any coral banks. I want to get in close to those breakers, but good holding ground will be good enough. I'm in luck, Mr. Ruthven! This shoal, as you know by the chart, has not been sighted since 1852—at least to be reported. Ships may have passed close to by night, or running before a typhoon—but we've spotted it! That's luck! Sheer luck, Mr. Ruthven."

"Yes, sir," said the mate.

With Eccles at the wheel, Ruthven did not want to discuss Harrap with the master. There was excitement on deck as the vessel was hauled closer to the wind and began to head for the line of shimmering white which appeared only at intervals to a watchful eye. But it was Saleeby himself who made Ruthven decide to bide his time before taking up the matter of the boatswain's talk. The old skipper was standing very straight, and staring ahead like a man in a dream. His lips moved at times, then smiled; his eyes seemed to shine with a happiness such as might be expected after a long quest which had promised only failure from the first.

From the forechains Svensen was already reporting after each cast:

"Tventy faddom—no bottom! Tventy faddom! No bottom!"

It was like a chant of some doleful singer of tragedy. But old Captain Saleeby listened, a smile of triumph on his worn and haggard face. For ahead of the *Moresby Trader* he knew there were patches of shoal water—and their existence was no longer doubtful. He paced his quarterdeck, murmuring happily—

"I've found it, Mr. Ruthven, I've found it!"

III

IT WAS four o'clock in the afternoon when the *Moresby Trader*, having cruised on various courses in the vicinity of the breakers, dropped her anchor in eight fathoms. She headed the northeast breeze, lifting to her surging chain and lying to leeward of the breakers.

There was an expectant excitement in the crew as they stowed the sails. It showed in the joyous key of their voices and the willing speed with which they carried out every order. And Harrap had become to the men a figure representing something of the faith which attaches to a necromancer who produces a doubtful miracle. As they saw things, the treasure he had foretold was already under their keel.

Captain Saleeby got afternoon sights for longitude and then gave an order which startled even Ruthven.

"Open the fore-hatch and rig heavy tackles to get a big bell buoy out of the hold. You'll find spars for shears, Mister."

Ruthven went down to the main deck, where Harrap was in conversation with three of the crew. The mate repeated the skipper's orders.

Harrap's bony face clouded and he stepped back to lean against the bulwarks.

"Bell buoy!" he exclaimed. "Now what in hell does he want a buoy with a bell on to it for?"

Ruthven had a ready reply.

"If the monsoon was to turn and we had to get off this anchorage to run before a blow, he'd want to pick this shoal up again easy, wouldn't he?"

"I s'pose he would," agreed Harrap with grudging reluctance. "But I never seen anybody keep somethin' secret by hangin' a bell over it. Did you, Mister?"

"What would you expect a ship to do if it runs into a bell buoy, such as the government might mark a shoal with?" countered Ruthven. "You're a canny man, Harrap, but it strikes me the skipper's a bit cannier than you are, because the last thing any skipper would expect to find marked with a clatter bell would be something like hidden treasure."

Harrap's face lighted a trifle.

"There's somethin' in what you say," he agreed.

Ruthven waved a hand at the broken water to windward.

"If you don't know what's there, what would you look for? You're seaman enough to know that buoys, especially with bells, keep ships away from a dangerous spot."

Harrap nodded, but Ruthven saw that he was not wholly content. There was a suspicious gleam in the boatswain's eyes as he held Ruthven's gaze. The men who had been listening were watching Harrap. Finally the boatswain turned and ordered a man to fetch a top maul and drive out the batten wedges from the forehold.

"Anyhow," said Harrap, "we'll know what's below—and it's my guess we'll find that divin' gear I been lookin' for."

Ruthven remained forward as the hatch covers came off. And Harrap was the first to go below. In the light of the slanting sunbeams he removed the tarpaulins from a big, steel, pear shaped bulb, fitted with a bronze bell having four clappers, so that as it swung to the swells it would produce peals of various notes. And with it was a great raffle of mooring chains, bridle, a big rusty sinker and a pair of rusty anchors to secure it to the bottom. All hands went to work rigging the spare spars and getting the gear on deck.

Leaving the men below, Harrap appeared on deck again after he had explored the schooner's hold. And Ruthven saw at once that the boatswain was again sullen, disappointed, and his hidden distrust once more apparent. He faced Ruthven with a challenge as he growled—

"Not a damned piece of air line, not a sign of an air pump—and no diver's suit."

"No?" asked Ruthven quietly.

The boatswain scowled.

"You don't take it very hard, Mister."

"I don't see why I should get mad about it, Harrap—nor you, either."

"There's a hocus in this business," growled Harrap.

"What do you mean by hocus?"

"I put you aft aboard here, so you'd find out what you could—and now you don't know anythin', and what's more, you don't give a damn who does."

Ruthven was not ready for an open break with Harrap, so the mate only laughed.

"The Old Man has told me no secrets, and you know as much as I do, which the skipper doesn't seem to care one way or another about. Can't you wait and see how things turn?"

"I tell you there's a hocus," insisted Harrap. "And it's in this fool buoy below. He's got the position of this reef now, and so've you—but you've got somethin' up your sleeve."

"Don't be a damned fool. We're anchored here, and here we'll most likely stay for some time. How can I keep anything up my sleeve if we're here to get treasure?"

"If he ain't goin' to do any divin', how'll we know anything? He can't bring anything up with his bare hands, can he? If there ain't divin' gear in the lazaret, he ain't goin' to stop here, and this bell buoy proves it."

"Is there something you expect me to do about it?" demanded Ruthven, who was beginning to lose his patience.

"You was glad enough to have me put you in the way of a ship, back in Manila," grumbled the boatswain. "But you don't fool me none now."

Ruthven restrained himself.

"Sure I was! But you seem to have an idea, Harrap, that I made a contract to produce the treasure you talked about. Here we are on the ground, and you say I'm fooling you, or trying to, because I can't tell you there's diving gear aboard. Now, get on with the work—or go aft and ask the skipper to explain things." Then he laughed, as if he bore no ill feelings against the boatswain.

But Harrap did not laugh. He went below again, still sullen, and directed the work of making fast the tackle for lifting the big two-ton buoy to the deck.

IT WAS nearly sundown by the time the shackles and chains and anchors and the big sinker were properly assembled. Then, with the improvised shears, the buoy was ready to be lifted over the bulwarks. The schooner was riding to all the chain on the starboard anchor. But when the buoy had been lowered the vessel was hauled ahead by use of the capstan until the twenty-fathom link was in sight.

Now the four clappers of the bell set up a steady ringing as the buoy tossed on the swells astern. And all hands knocked off just as night came on, and the flaming afterglow in the sky turned from vivid crimson to black, with low hanging stars swaying among the trucks of the schooner.

Jackson, the black cook, provided an especially good meal for the tired men. And he carried the food forward to the forecastle himself, making a couple of trips with heavily laden skillets. And as if to celebrate the fact that the *Moresby Trader* had reached her goal, Jackson topped off the crew supper with lemon pie. The cook's merry laughter came across the deck as Ruthven went to his own stateroom to wash up for supper.

Captain Saleeby was in the main cabin bent over his chart.

"We've got some music, Mister," he called out, as Ruthven passed through the little messroom by the galley. "I'll sleep tonight by that bell."

"And how about tomorrow, sir?" asked Ruthven, as he looked in, wiping his face.

"I want to get some idea of the extent of this shoal," said the captain, as he laid down his rulers and dividers. "I'll want to know whether it's a reef, or a bank. So in the morning we'll run a couple of lines of soundings, showing how they bear from the bell buoy."

"You're sure that this broken water is the same that's charted as Existence Doubtful on the chart, sir?"

The captain smiled.

"Not a question of it! We're about sixty miles from where it's plotted, to the nor'east'ard. The skipper who sighted it back in 'Fifty-two was probably running before a typhoon and hadn't got a shot at the sun for days—or his chronometer was out. Anyhow, a master's got enough to do if he's running under bare poles, without being very accurate in his position."

Laying aside a tray with an empty plate and a cup and saucer, Captain Saleeby gestured Ruthven closer, so he could see the chart in the pale light of the gimbal lamp.

"Look here, Mr. Ruthven!" He pointed to thinly penciled lines laid off at right angles on the chart. "This is where we are, roughly. But we'll get accurate meridian altitudes tomorrow. And we'll get some star shots tonight. I want a good fix, of course." He opened a bottle of ink and picked up a pen.

"You've had your supper, sir?"

"Yes. I'll turn in for awhile. Felt a little weak tonight, but I'll pick up after a nap. Matter of fact, Mr. Ruthven, my health is uncertain—much more uncertain than I've admitted even to myself."

He leaned back in his chair, holding the pen in shaking fingers, and sighed, as if working at the chart had taken what little strength there was left in his frail body. And with the pitching of the anchored vessel his head shook with a trembling kind of nodding. But in his pallid face there was something akin to triumph.

"You've been too much in the sun today, sir."

"Oh, yes, yes," assented the old man. "Of course! A man of my years feels the sun in these latitudes." He leaned forward again. "Watch this!" he said with a smile.

Then, drawing a ring about the tiny specks which were on the chart marked, "*Breakers, reported 1852, E.D.,*" he drew a line from the ring that ran northeast to where the penciled lines of latitude and longitude crossed.

"As these are no longer doubtful as to existence, and as we'll put 'em where they belong on the chart here, I'm naming 'em."

He wrote in a shaky scrawl, two words: *Saleeby Shoals.*

"There, now, Mr. Ruthven!" he exclaimed as he leaned back in his chair. "You're in on a christening—a deep-sea christening! Ho, Jackson! Fetch me that champagne!"

"Yes, suh! Yes, suh!" called the cook in reply. "Comin', Cap'n!"

Ruthven held out a hand.

"You've found 'em, sir—and you've named 'em! Congratulations!"

The skipper's frail hand had a sudden firmness in it.

"Human vanity, Mr. Ruthven," he laughed. "Just vanity! It's only my little joke, but I'll tell you all about it."

"But, sir," protested Ruthven, "you've located this shoal and you've every right to give it a name. It's been a menace to ships—and perhaps more than one vessel has piled up at your shoal."

Saleeby looked up, squinting through the yellowish light from the lamp.

"No doubt of it, Mr. Ruthven. You'll have a chance to look for the bones of ships out there tomorrow when you're running your lines of soundings. In clear water, in strong sunlight, you'll be able to see bottom in the shoal patches. So tell Harrap, who'll take one boat, to keep a sharp lookout for any signs of wrecks."

Jackson entered, bearing a bottle wrapped in wet cloths, and a tray with a pair of tumblers. But Ruthven barely noticed the cook, for the mate's head was in a whirl at the orders to examine the shoal for wrecks.

"There *is* treasure!" the mate was saying mentally. "Harrap's right."

"You want it open now, suh?" asked the black cook.

Captain Saleeby, his head bent low over the chart, did not reply. Then the cook gave a startled cry—and the old skipper pitched forward on the table, his breath coming in swift gasps.

Swiftly Jackson seized Saleeby by his shoulders and lifted him back into the chair.

"Quick, suh! We got to put him in his bunk. One of them spells."

Ruthven helped the cook to gather up the frail body of Saleeby. They lifted him into his cabin, close at hand, and laid him on his bunk.

"Just another attack," he murmured. "I'll be—all right."

Jackson, who seemed to know what was required, hastily took a pellet from a medicine bottle in a tiny rack above the skipper's pillow and, lifting the old man's head, put a glass of water to his lips.

"You need yo' medicine, suh! Take this pellet and a mouf'ful of water."

Saleeby obeyed and let his head fall back on his pillow. Ruthven went out, and Jackson closed the door behind him.

"He goes and works hisself sick today, what with all bein' excited up about this here reef and all."

Ruthven nodded.

"He's been a lot sicker than I realized, Jackson. I should've known he'd wear himself out."

Jackson made a gesture for caution. Ruthven presumed it to be a sign for silence to avoid disturbing the skipper. But the next instant the mate knew another meaning was behind the lifted hand of the old black cook. For his next action was to reach into his pocket and bring out a metal object which glistened under the lamplight. He held it forward before Ruthven's eyes.

It was a magazine for an automatic pistol—and loaded with cartridges.

IV

RUTHVEN, astounded, stared at the magazine in Jackson's hand. Then he looked at the old cook. The white haired negro was not in a joking mood, for his wrinkled face was set in grim lines and his eyes met the mate's steadily, seeking for the reaction which the young man would show when he had grasped some understanding of the meaning of ammunition for such an efficient weapon as a heavy caliber pistol.

"Where did this come from?" asked Ruthven as he took the metal casing from the cook's hand.

"I been wantin' to make a few remarks of a private nature fo' some time, suh," whispered Jackson. "My cap'n, he's been too sickish to go frettin' him like this."

"Come to my room," said Ruthven.

He led the way into the little messroom by the galley and opened the door of his cabin, which had a window opening forward to the main deck—a small window in the bulkhead which was the break of the quarterdeck. He closed the window, but did not light the lamp.

"I didn't git no sleep last night," began Jackson, "but just lay and bloodhounded on what happened that day it rained."

"The crew—there must be a gun among the men," said Ruthven.

"Yes, suh! That's what I been bloodhoundin' on. It's been fo' days since it rained, and Johnny the Knife dried his pants at the galley fire. Them new pants of his, and he hangs 'em empty to dry."

"You found this ammunition in Johnny's pants?"

"No, suh! But in the bottle pocket I finds a round hole, to one side—and the cloth oily. More I looks at that pocket hole, more I's sure that only a gun makes that hole. But I begins to turn it around in my haid. Then I begins to take the crew grub to the focsle, suh. You notice how I went for'ard this evenin'."

"I noticed you've hung around up for'ard lately," said Ruthven. "Then it's Johnny who has a gun?"

"Them bullets what I showed you, suh, they comes from Johnny's coat, hangin' in the focsle. I picks the pocket of the coat this evenin'—and my cap'n, he's too sickish fo' me to go tellin' him that scoundrel's got a gun."

"I had something I wanted to tell him myself, Jackson, but I've held off for the same reason. But what you've found out is more important than anything I've observed." He rose now, pulled a heavy curtain across the little window, and lighted the lamp near the head of his bunk. "Let me see that magazine again."

Jackson handed it over, shaking his white head solemnly.

"I can't make out nohow, suh, how this bunch of gutter scrapin's that man Harrap brings aboa'd here comes by new shootin' guns."

Ruthven examined the metal container, and the big blunt nosed cartridges.

"You're right, Jackson; this is new. And it's Army stuff. Now, Sin Yat Yuan's place, where Harrap worked, dealt in old Army and Navy stuff."

Jackson nodded gravely.

"I been projectin' round in my own mind that if the Harrap men had this-like stuff in Manila, they'd mo' likely sell it for drinks than fetch it aboa'd here. And I can't find no way out, but that Johnny the Knife gits this from the bosun."

"Then others have guns, too," said Ruthven. "Jackson, this is serious, and just how serious I'm beginning to understand. Because Harrap believes that before we get back to Manila we'll have treasure aboard."

The cook scowled in a puzzled way.

"I don't know what Cap'n Saleeby's polin' round out here fo' myself. All I do know is I been with him twenty years. He ain't got no relations left, and he's got money enough for all the livin' he intends to do—tol' me so hisself more'n once, suh. He can't eat nothin' but my cookin', and that's why he brings me along fo' this trip. I just kind of had an idea he wanted to go sail boatin' again for to git his health up, but I don't bother him with no questions."

"Then you don't know why he's come looking for this shoal and has anchored here?"

"No, suh, I don't. He's a whimmy man, and if he was to go lookin' fo' bears on icebergs, I'd go too. He's jus' naturally tired of runnin' steamboats up and down—and told me so lots of times. He's been ailin' a long time, and he always would say, when he was jokin' like, that he wanted to die at sea, because it's a cheap, clean and easy way fo' dyin'. But, shucks, he gits over them spells he has. Harrap, he mus' be crazy if he thinks we're goin' to have treasure—and whereall would anybody git it at in the middle of the ocean?"

"From a ship, lost on this shoal years ago, with gold aboard her."

"Gold!" Jackson's voice was an awed whisper. "Sure 'nough? Man! Is that what my cap'n been circumventin' around on that chart fo'? Now you has said somethin'! He's been lookin' at that chart for a year off an' on!"

"I'm telling you this," said Ruthven, "because we're going to have trouble with Harrap. I don't want to worry the skipper, but we've got to protect him. And you can help. In the morning both boats are going off for soundings, and I want you to hunt the focsle for pistols."

"If I gits 'em they're goin' to miss 'em, suh."

"All right. They'll know they've been pinched, and that'll be something for 'em to think over. I don't know whether the men Captain Saleeby brought aboard are in with Harrap's crowd or not. I'd swear that Galten and Svensen are not friendly with him, and maybe Kerr and Smith would stand with us. That leaves Harrap with his own five—and if you can find a couple of guns, that'll leave Harrap with three armed men, assuming that all of Harrap's men have weapons."

He turned down the lamp, then blew it out and looked out over the starlit deck. He could see the crew on the forehatch and the forecastle head. The anchor light was swaying from a forestay, and a thin glow of light was visible from the entrance to the port side of the forecastle.

"Who all you goin' leave aboa'd with me when you goes off boatin' tomorrer, suh?"

"I'll leave men who can be trusted, anyhow. And you can feel your way with 'em, to see how they stand on this Harrap business; but get guns first, if you can."

"I left some skillets for'ard to go back fo' in the mornin'," suggested the cook.

"Good! Now keep an eye on the skipper while I have a few words with Harrap."

THEY left the cabin, and Ruthven, finding that Saleeby was sleeping, went to the quarterdeck. He called for Harrap, and the boatswain came aft.

"What's up?" asked Harrap as he drew near Ruthven, who stood on the other side of the wheelbox.

"He's looking for a wreck here," said Ruthven in a tone which he wanted the boatswain to take as confidential.

Harrap's body stiffened on his widespread legs, and his shoulders sagged forward. The shadow of the spanker boom was athwart his face for a moment, and then he moved forward toward the wheelbox in a crouching attitude, capped head thrust out. His hands swung at his sides as his body swayed to the lift of the anchored schooner. Above the lazy tolling of the four toned bell of the buoy astern, Ruthven heard the boatswain utter a sharp exclamation of satisfaction. It was like the yelp of a wolf as he leaps to the kill.

"Hey? What wreck?" asked Harrap hoarsely, with utmost caution.

"I don't know. He'll tell me later."

"He wants to keep it from us—the crew?" asked Harrap.

"No. Two boats will take soundings tomorrow, and you'll have one in charge. We're to keep an eye out in any water shoal enough to see bottom."

"What's he holdin' back the name of the ship for?" asked Harrap.

"He's a very sick man. Cook and myself had to lift him into his bunk. You keep your shirt on, Harrap, because if he dies here we're in on something fat, as you've always said."

"Oh, I ain't lookin' for trouble," said the boatswain, his tongue suddenly smooth and his voice shaking with suppressed elation. "Of course, we're here and we're entitled to anything good, as I sees it, if the Old Man has to be dropped over the side in a canvas shirt and ballast iron. We'll have to play together then, Mr. Ruthven, naturally."

"That's the only thing to do," said Ruthven. "But how about the crew, if anything was to happen to the Old Man? Will they play a fair game with us if we locate treasure?"

"Don't you fret none about the crew," asserted Harrap. "They do what I say, and if they decide they don't, why, I ain't the man to be run by the hands."

"I've no doubt of that," replied the mate easily. "But there are four men the skipper shipped, and we don't know much about 'em. You've had a chance to make up your mind where they'd stand if we all had to throw in together."

Harrap poked his cap to the other side of his head, then stepped to the wheelbox and placed his elbows on it, thrusting his shoulders toward Ruthven.

"Galten, he ain't never said much—just sticks to hisself," said the boatswain guardedly. "Svensen and Kerr, they're thick as jailbirds, but Smith just grins when he hears the rest of us talk about what we're here for."

"They've all heard your ideas—and know there's something we're looking for here?" asked Ruthven.

"Oh, they've heard all the talk, yes," admitted Harrap. "And now that we've anchored here and got that buoy over, they're pretty well lit up on what's goin' on. They'll want a bite out of anything we can salvage, of course."

"Then tell 'em that whatever we find, we'll all get our proper bite," said Ruthven. "You and I'll be in command if the Old Man slips his cable, Harrap."

"Now, that's the proper talk!" commended the boatswain warmly. "You and me won't have no trouble, Ruthven."

"I wouldn't be here but for you, Harrap."

"You got mad at me for sayin' as much, but I guess you know now that we've got somethin' that Saleeby thought good enough to quit his line for and buy a schooner to come here for—and it's good enough for us."

"You said it, Harrap. And all we've got to do is find it—in the morning."

Harrap drew away from the wheelbox.

"Good enough! If it's there we'll find it." He paused, then stepped back to the wheelbox. "One thing I don't like—and that's the black cook."

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's a skipper's man, an old-timer with Saleeby."

"What of it?"

Harrap shook his head doubtfully.

"He's got ears on him like a pair of forestaysails, and winged out every time he goes near the crew. That nigger's too damned slick to suit me."

"Oh, Jackson's all right."

"He's feedin' the hands too blasted good to be all right! And he's too ready to wait on us for'ard, what with fetchin' the chow himself the last few days."

"Why, that's a queer thing for you to say!" Ruthven pretended an astonishment which he felt was suitable for the circumstances.

"Queer or no, I don't like it," insisted Harrap. "That cook's snoopin' for'ard for no good reason. He's spyin' for the skipper, and I know it."

"What good'll it do him to spy for the skipper? If the Old Man dies on us we can make Jackson jump our way. I'll see that he keeps out of the focsle from now on."

Harrap moved away again.

"Good idea. But don't trust that nigger; he's pretty light fingered."

"You mean he's been stealing things?"

"Well, yes. Tobacco, and such-like. But that ain't his main game. He's got

some reason for wantin' to make himself good and strong with the hands."

Ruthven laughed quietly.

"Never you mind the black cook, Harrap. We've got things in our own hands, so be ready with both boats in the morning—and the less you tell the hands the better."

"Find out yourself what you can," said Harrap as he turned to leave the quarterdeck, "and let me know."

"Sure. We've got to work together, and the only way we can make a go of things is to be frank and open with each other, just as we've been in this talk."

Growling his agreement, Harrap moved forward and descended to the maindeck, unaware that Ruthven was grinning upward at the stars, whispering—

"Frankness is Harrap's middle name—like hell it is!"

V

RUTHVEN and Harrap had both longboats swinging in the davits and ready to lower by the time Captain Saleeby appeared on deck next morning. The weather held clear, with a freshening breeze. The bell buoy astern was playing a lusty tune on its bell with its four toned clappers.

"All hands have had breakfast and we're ready to put off, sir," Ruthven reported. "And I hope you're better."

Saleeby's face had a drawn and strained look, and he was weak on his legs. He held to the wheelbox and turned his tired eyes to the sky.

"I slept fairly well, and I didn't get those star shots last night. But I didn't expect you to be ready to put off so promptly with the boats," said the old skipper.

"I told Harrap last night we'd make an early start, and he began overhauling the gear at daylight."

Ruthven, with no man at the wheel to listen, was tempted to warn Saleeby of Harrap's attitude and the cook's discovery of ammunition in the hands of the crew. But it was apparent that Saleeby was broken in health, and the mate was reluctant to worry him.

"Harrap is a good bosun," said Saleeby as he scanned the horizon. "I've always found him reliable. Now from the boats you can take bearings of the buoy, and I'll run up the ensign as a recall signal, because I'll want you back aboard in time for the noon sights. I want a good fix."

Ruthven, now aware that Saleeby had full confidence in Harrap, abandoned the idea of saying anything against the boatswain until Jackson was able to prove that the crew had weapons.

"I hope you'll rest all you can today, sir, and not get too much sun. If we're to be here for some time—"

"Oh, I expect to be here a long time, Mister," broke in Saleeby. "We've all the time in the clock, so there's no special hurry about anything." He turned his tired eyes on the mate and smiled in his fatherly way.

"The weather may turn against us, sir," said Ruthven.

Saleeby nodded. Jackson came up the companionway with a tray bearing mugs of coffee. He spread out the captain's canvas reclining chair. Saleeby wearily stretched himself out. As he sipped his coffee his face twisted with twinges of pain.

"You'll want to be getting back to port, sir, unless you begin to improve at once. It seems to me that you'd be wise to be near a doctor."

Saleeby smiled again.

"I've had these attacks before. I don't worry about them. Besides, with you and Harrap and Jackson, I'm in good hands."

Ruthven caught the cook's eye. And Jackson's look, before he went below, was a glance of pity, with a suggestion of caution in saying anything which would be disturbing to the invalid.

The mate finished his coffee. Saleeby lay back, holding his cap over his eyes.

"I'll want you for the noon sights," he said weakly.

Leaving at once for the waist, Ruthven was met there by Harrap.

"We're all set to go," said the boatswain eagerly.

"Then lower away," said the mate. "Take Johnny, Leffler and Lopez with you. I'll take Galten, Eccles and Svensen."

Harrap looked a trifle startled. He scratched his head as the lineup of the men in the boats did not suit him.

"That'll mean Smith, Kerr and Ralvaag stay back aboard, eh?"

Ruthven knew what was running in the boatswain's mind. Of the three men to remain aboard the schooner while the boats were away, Ralvaag was the only one which belonged to the group in the crew which had been provided by Harrap. The other two were Saleeby's men, shipped by the captain independently of the boatswain.

"Three are plenty to leave behind—and there's the cook, too, who can bear a hand if needed. All hands will have a go at the boat work, because the skipper says we're to be here for some time." The mate was casual about the matter.

"Good!" said Harrap. "The longer we stay the better I'll like it, because we're bound to find that wreck we're lookin' for if we stay with the job." He grinned and waved a hand to the crew of his boat to get it overside.

"Then keep a close watch on the bottom where the water is shoal enough to see anything," urged Ruthven.

He went on with the captain's instructions about taking bearings with each cast of the lead, using the bell buoy as a seamark, and to return when the ensign was run up. Then Harrap boarded his boat, and the sail filled in the fresh breeze, and she stood away on an east-northeast course from the *Moresby Trader*.

Ruthven went to the port boat.

"Svensen," he said, "you'll remain aboard here with Smith and Kerr. Break out the spare sails in the lazaret and lay the canvas on deck here for an airing. Ralvaag will take your place in the boat party. Lower away, men."

Ralvaag scowled, but said nothing. He took his place at the falls. He may not have caught the significance of Ruthven's swift change of orders whereby Harrap was outwitted, and the three men left behind were all Saleeby men. Jackson would be able to search the forecastle while the three were working aft, getting sails out of the lazaret.

Ruthven took the tiller of the boat, and they scudded away in a north-northeast direction. Thus the boats would run on the two sides of a triangle, of which the bell buoy would be the apex. The mate could see that Harrap had already brought his boat into the wind, and Lopez was casting with the hand lead. Harrap was in the stern taking a bearing on the buoy. In a few minutes the boatswain's boat bore away again, lifting to the heavy ground swell which was caused by the shoaling of the bank.

Galten stood ready in the mate's boat, the leadline looped in one hand, the lead in the other. All hands watched for the bottom. Before long coral growths of many colors became visible, and they found themselves over patches of submarine forests which swayed with the movement of the water. Galten got bottom at three fathoms. Ruthven took his bearing and noted the depth in a small book.

Steadily they increased the distance from Harrap's boat, as well as from the schooner. By the time the ensign went to the mizzen truck, Ruthven was almost two miles from the *Moresby Trader*. At once he put his tiller over and ran before the wind. Harrap was not so prompt, with the result that Ruthven was alongside the schooner well ahead of the boatswain's party.

Sending the three men who had spread the spare canvas to bear a hand with the boat's crew in getting it swung abroad, Ruthven hastened to the galley. Jackson took a cover from a bucket and revealed three automatic pistols with several extra magazines.

Ruthven gave a low whistle.

"Said anything to the skipper about this?"

Jackson shook his head.

The mate pocketed two of the weapons hastily.

"There's going to be hell to pay when Harrap's men find these are missing—and if there are three to be found, there are probably more hidden."

He turned to listen. Harrap was already alongside, and the voices of his men could be heard as they sweated the boat up with the falls. As he thrust spare magazines into his trouser pockets, Ruthven went on in a hasty whispering—"Can you use a gun, Jackson?"

"Man, wid this—" he held up the pistol—"I'm just walkin' round like a two-legged adder!"

"Then get on deck with the skipper and stick by him. Hide in the hood of the companionway at first, so Harrap'll think you're here in the galley. He'll be aft in a minute. Quick, now."

Jackson scuttled into the main cabin. Ruthven grabbed up an empty coffee mug so that when he appeared on deck it would appear as if he had only gone to the galley to refresh himself. He strolled out, the mug held as if it were in use.

Harrap was standing by the davits watching the men secure the gripes. He turned and glanced aft to Ruthven.

"What luck?" called the boatswain.

"We didn't see anything of what we went after. Did you?"

Harrap threw out his hands in a gesture of disgust that he had not been able to locate any signs of a sunken wreck of a vessel.

"Leave the boats swinging," ordered the mate. "We'll probably be going off again this afternoon."

Lopez and Johnny dropped their work as Ralvaag said something to the boatswain. Harrap swore at Ralvaag's disclosure of the fact that Svensen had been left behind and Ralvaag had been out in the mate's boat. Ruthven could not hear what was said, but he divined the meaning from Harrap's outburst. Lopez, Johnny and Ralvaag started for the forecastle on the run, and disappeared.

At once there was a clamor of angry voices from the men who had hastened to their quarters. Through the open door Ruthven could see things being thrown about. He knew what was happening. They were hunting for the stolen weapons. Harrap started forward and, as he reached the doorway and looked in, Ruthven caugth three words of an infuriated sentence from Johnny the Knife. They were "that damned nigger!"

"The cat's out of the bag," Ruthven told himself. "And hell's going to pop a safety valve this time." He turned and ran up the steps to the quarterdeck.

CAPTAIN SALEEBY, reclining in his canvas chair, held his sextant on his knees, waiting for the sun to approach the meridian. The hack chronometer was on the wheelbox, and Ruthven saw that his own sextant in its case, was nearby, with the box of paper and pencils used for observations.

The confused sound of wrangling voices forward could be heard by the skipper, and Harrap angrily seeking to quiet the quarreling.

"What's the trouble among the hands?" asked Saleeby, as he looked up in a puzzled way to the young mate.

Before Ruthven could reply there was a loud cry—a smothered scream—from the forecastle. There was a new outburst of yells and cursing, but as the men were now apparently fighting inside the forecastle, Ruthven could not see clearly what was going on. He started to run forward, just as Harrap come bounding aft over the canvas on the main deck.

The boatswain was halfway up the steps when Ruthven blocked the way to the quarterdeck. Harrap, his head just below the break of the deck, looked up, fury in his face.

"You pulled a slick trick on me!" the boatswain accused, the words coming from the side of his mouth in a low growl. "Told me Ralvaag was to stay back, and you took him in your boat!"

"Harrap, if you want trouble, you can have it!" retorted Ruthven. "You stay for'ard and stop that row!" He gestured

the boatswain back to the main deck, hoping for a few minutes more time in which to warn Saleeby.

Harrap backed down off the steps, but turned to look up again.

"You had a damned good reason to switch them men, and I ain't fooled. You've played me for a sucker long enough."

Saleeby came staggering up to Ruthven.

"What's the trouble with the bosun?" he demanded.

"There's a fight, sir," said Harrap.

"Then go stop it! And get the boats unhooked and stowed on deck. And stand by to heave short as soon as I've got the noon sight." He turned back to his chair.

Harrap was thunderstruck.

"Under way!" he cried. "Under way for where?"

"You heard the order! Get for'ard!" ordered Ruthven.

Harrap put his hands on his hips and made a face.

"You've seen that wreck! And you've told Saleeby! Got what you want, eh! And we're to be dumped ashore. Said this morning we'd be here some time—and now it's heave short! We will like hell! We'll stick on this shoal and find that wreck!" He turned and ran for the forecastle, yelling for Lopez and Johnny as he went.

"What in the devil is he talking about?" demanded Saleeby, his weak legs shaking under him as he held to the wheelbox. "Has the man gone out of his head?"

Ruthven hurried aft.

"Captain, the men are armed! And Harrap says they won't—"

A roar of voices broke out again, and from a struggling mass of men Svensen appeared in the forecastle door, smashing his way to freedom with his great fists. His arms were bare and his shirt hung from his belt like a skirt of ribbons.

"Stapped! Stapped!" he cried. "Smitty! Kerr! Stapped!" With a mighty blow he hurled Harrap from him and, free of his assailants at last, the Swede came running aft.

Galten also burst through the door, and with blood streaming from his face, followed after Svensen. But Harrap, recovering his balance at the bulwarks where he had been sent spinning by the Swede's blow, pulled a pistol from his pocket and fired. Galten plunged forward on the canvas.

It had all happened swiftly. Svensen paused in his flight to grab a pair of iron belaying pins from a rail, then leaped up the steps to the quarterdecks.

"Look out, Mate!" he yelled.

"Stand by, Svensen! They're coming!" said Ruthven.

"I kills that cockney vid a board!" panted Svensen.

He was referring to Eccles, of Harrap's gang. But Ruthven gave the matter no thought, for Harrap, with Johnny the Knife and Lopez, the three of them with pistols, were racing for the steps on the starboard side, to come up the other side. And Ralvaag and Leffler were hurrying after the boatswain and the other two.

As Ruthven leaped for the starboard side he drew both pistols. Out of the tail of his eye he saw that the captain still clung to the wheelbox, staring in amazement. In that instant the mate saw the cook pop out of the companionway hood, gun in hand.

Svensen, who had kept close beside Ruthven, gained the head of the ladder at the break of the deck first. And he hurled into the advancing trio, one belaying pin after the other. It was not until then that Ruthven noticed that the Swede's arms had been slashed by a knife, and blood came from them as he threw the missiles.

Svensen's aim was good. Harrap was checked by being hit in his left arm by a pin. A weapon fell from his hand, and he shook the useless limb as he cursed the Swede. Johnny the Knife had been struck full in the face. He went down, dropping his weapons, and lifting himself on his hands, blood streaming from his jaws. By this time Leffler and Ralvaag had reached the others. And Lopez was the first to start up for the quarterdeck, his teeth gleaming whitely from his sweat

covered swarthy skin, a knife in one hand and a pistol in the other.

Ruthven, his right pistol ready, was only holding his fire until the half black man appeared high enough above the deck to make a fair target. But Jackson's figure, bent, with gun thrust forward, moved swiftly across the intervening five feet of quarterdeck, and the cook was between Ruthven and Lopez.

There was the report of a gun. Jackson's hand jumped; there was a wisp of smoke, and Ruthven and Svensen saw Lopez curl his body backward. He crashed down upon Harrap and Leffler, who were climbing after him.

Ruthven leaped toward the break of the deck. Harrap, just getting to his feet, threw up a hand and fired, aiming at Ruthven. The mate and Jackson fired at the same time. The boatswain, one hand on the deck, fired again, and then the weapon fell from his grasp and he toppled sidewise into the waterways and lay still.

Svensen appeared with a coil of line in one hand and a long iron rod in the other. The Swede had found the rod and line used for sounding the ship's well. He leaped for the main deck and, roaring in rage, made for Johnny the Knife.

Johnny fled forward, leaping over Galten's body. The Swede pursued, slashing wildly with the rod and yelling:

"I shows you how to stap! I show you!"

Ralvaag and Leffler threw down their weapons and lifted their hands.

"Don't shoot!" cried Leffler. "We're done!"

Ruthven made no reply, for the moment concerned with what was happening on the forecastle head. Johnny the Knife, battered to his knees by Svensen, was begging for mercy. The mad Swede kicked him overboard.

Svensen came charging back.

"Pick up the guns!" shouted Ruthven. But Svensen did not heed the order then.

Ralvaag and Leffler, hearing the Swede's screams of rage, fled across the deck. Svensen pursued first one, then the other, but they both eluded him when the line attached to the well rod tripped him and he fell. By the time he was on his feet again they had barricaded themselves behind the forecastle door.

Seeing that Jackson had gone back to the captain, Ruthven ran down to the main deck and forward. Svensen was battering at the starboard door with a top maul. The mate grasped his mop of yellowish hair and dragged him away.

"Them fallers!" raged Svensen. "Vid Johnny, they staps Smitty and Kerr! They been kill Galten, too!" With his bleeding arms he wiped sweat from his face and backed against the boom of the foresail, panting. "Look on me!" he pleaded. "They cut me planty!" He looked at his slashed arms.

Ruthven seized a big hand.

"Do as I say and stick by me, Svensen," he urged soothingly. "Don't let 'em out, but don't kill 'em. We want 'em to testify in court and clear this business up. We'll never get to port."

"Sure!" agreed Svensen heartily. "We give 'em to the police!" He sat down on the fore-hatch and turned vengeful eyes on the forecastle door.

Ruthven ran back to the quarterdeck. The black cook was bending over Saleeby, who was lying back in his canvas chair. And Jackson was talking as he waved his hands in restraining gesticulations.

"Jackson has told me, Mr. Ruthven, that Harrap armed the crew," began Saleeby, as he stared up at the mate.

His face had a waxen hue and his eyes were filled with a dazed look.

Ruthven nodded.

"Harrap told me you were looking for a treasure ship lost on the shoals here, and refused to leave until we found it. And when he heard you order the anchor hove short, he believed you were changing your plans because I'd located the wreck."

Captain Saleeby's amazed eyes held Ruthven's for a minute.

"Treasure ship!" gasped the old skipper. He shook his head sadly and sighed. "Because I did not want Manila laughing at me, as it would if it knew I was hunting a shoal, I engaged Harrap to attend to

things privately. If I'd told the truth, nobody'd believed me, Mr. Ruthven."

"But, sir, you told me to keep careful watch of the bottom for a wreck—and I thought myself that Harrap was right, that you came looking for treasure."

"There might be a wreck on any shoal, of course," said Saleeby weakly. "But the only treasure I wanted, I've found, Mr. Ruthven. That's my name on the chart below. As I told you in Manila, my name has never been associated with disaster. I don't like to see my name swept from these waters which I've loved so much —and I don't want my name on a balk of stone that clutters up the land. In the Sailing Directions—and on the charts. Just a little bite of sea fame, and nobody harmed or hurt. Then Harrap has to go and mislead all hands! Poor devils! They've paid for my harmless whim—and I thought I could have a proper sea epitaph without losing men's lives." He sighed with great weariness.

"I should've told you what was going on before—"

"You did your best. Hand me my sextant, Jackson."

The cook reached to the wheelbox and picked up the instrument. Saleeby raised himself with an effort and turned the telescope toward the horizon, working to catch the sun on the mirror. But in a minute he passed the sextant back and dropped back in his chair.

"The sun has passed meridian. Get an accurate fix tomorrow, Mr. Ruthven, and head for the nearest port."

"You'd better come below, sir."

"I'm dying—and I want the sky over me. You'll find a copy of my will below. The doctors gave me three months to live, and I've overrun that time. Make your report to the Navy on this position—and name it Saleeby's Shoals— My treasure is my only monument, and that's my name on the charts. What more could an old seaman ask?"

"I understand, sir. Then you'll want to be buried—here?"

Saleeby nodded.

"The only mistake I made was to tell Harrap I wanted men who were down on their luck. That made him suspicious. But I've no relations left in the world, and I wanted to be of some help to men on the beach." A spasm of pain crossed his face. "And these men I wanted to help—the dead—they go with me. Oh, if the world could think of something besides gold!"

"It wa'n't your fault, suh," said Jackson.

Saleeby reached for the black man's hand.

"Faithful old Jack! You'll find a copy of my will below. It leaves my house in Sydney to you." He reached out his other hand and Ruthven took it.

"And I left the schooner to you and Harrap, with a little running capital," went on the old skipper. "All to go to the survivor—and Harrap's dead. So the *Moresby Trader* goes to you, Mr. Ruthven —and that girl back home."

"To me, sir! But, why—"

"Because you're young and you needed a leg-up. I picked you for the new owner back in Harrap's place. I knew I wouldn't need any schooner when this job was done. I've got my little measure of sea fame. I can hear it in the ringing of the bell buoy." He smiled with quivering lips as he laughed softly.

As the sun fell low that afternoon the skipper of the *Moresby Trader* watched the red light in the sky go out to the tolling of the bell on Saleeby's Shoal.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

WITH our publication of "The Dark Road," beginning in this issue, Hugh Pendexter resumes his long line of historical novels, which have for years enjoyed such popularity with *Adventure* readers. Many of these stories, published later in book form, have gained the author an even wider audience in the United States. As many of you have long maintained, there are few writers today who chronicle so sharply and entertainingly the colorful days when the Nation was young.

Herewith a few words by Mr. Pendexter about the sources of the present story:

Norway, Maine

I desire the ancient privilege of expatiating a bit on the characters in my story "The Dark Road." The Doanes, with the exception of Nancy (fictitious), really lived and did much as I have described, only more so. There were five or six boys, professedly Tories. In Sherman Day's "Historical Collections of Pennsylvania" it is stated that the Federal government offered $800 per Doane, "dead or alive." Moses was the captain. According to Shea, he was shot, after he had surrendered, by a member of the posse who had been his partner in rascality, and who feared his former chief would proclaim as much.

The same authority gives considerable space to FitzPatrick, who was apprenticed to a blacksmith in Cheshire County and later joined the patriot army. Tiring of discipline, he deserted and took to the highways. He was the Rob Roy McGregor of Chester County, just as the Doanes held forth in Bucks County. The two often worked together, although chroniclers of the times give Captain Fitz credit for never robbing the Whigs. He was often pursued by posses. He was betrayed by his Delilah and executed.

FITZPATRICK was the more spectacular of all the border outlaws, and many a legend is built around his name. He was a Beau Brummel in dress, and found pleasure in suddenly entering a tavern, where a posse (in pursuit of him) was dining. Threatening to shoot the first man to make a move, he would call for a drink, gain the door and vanish.

In Watson's "Annals of Philadelphia" vol. 2, the author says there were five brothers, fine looking, hard riding men, and states that two were shot in combat and two were hanged. He adds, "They were far above ordinary robbers, being very generous and humane to all moderate people. The Whigs had injured them, and they sought revenge at the hazard of their lives. The trade in horses when the British wintered in Philadelphia brought fat profits. Horses were brought up from the Carolinas and Virginia, and Moses swaggered and had his day in the captured town's dissipations.

THERE was no one act which more greatly aroused the resentment of Philadelphia's citizenry, regardless of political completion, than that of General Howe's appropriating for his own use the coach and horses of Mrs. Mary Pemberton. Howe's reputation was spoiled by the 1777 campaign. His indolence and indifference to martial affairs were quite complete. Unknown to the patriots, he had requested, in the fall of '77, to be recalled. His gesture at Whitemarsh, the assault on Red Bank, and another gesture at Barren Hill, limited his activities.

He was never a cruel man, but will always take the blame for the excesses of his troops. I have exaggerated none in picturing the play acting, the indolence loving, the flirtatious, drinking, gaming days wasted by the English army while occupying the town. Howe was but marking time until he could return to England, where he was bound to be very popular, not only because of his pleasure seeking propensities, but also because his grandmother, Sophia Kilmansegge, found favor with George I, and his mother was the result of that infatuation.

SUCH characterizations and descriptions of historical personages as I have used are based on the diarists of the times. Mrs. Darrach not only carried word of the enemy's proposed attack on Whitemarsh, but to conceal her purpose she brought back with her a twenty-five pound bag of flour. She learned of the proposed attack by overhearing the adjutant-general, who was quartered in her house, read his orders aloud to a brother officer.

Blidgett as I have described him may seem fantastic, but no more so than the Connecticut Yankee general who was on Sir Henry Clinton's payroll as a British spy while serving throughout the war without being suspected. This man was even one of the board which found André guilty, and joined with the others in sentencing him to be hanged.

—HUGH PENDEXTER

ONE of you recently wrote E. E. Harriman of Ask Adventure about the feeding habits of condors. His answer elicited the following interesting letter:

Flushing, N. Y.

Can you say definitely whether or not buzzards or condors (I believe they are closely related, probably of the same genus) are given to catching small birds or chickens and eating them? You say in your article that condors eat only carrion.

FOR almost all of my life I have lived where buzzards are common, that is, in the South (Alabama and other Gulf States) and in the West Indies. It had always been my impression that buzzards were carrion eaters and never touch anything alive.

Sometime ago, however, while in Port Antonio, Jamacia, B. W. I., I saw on three different occasions a buzzard catch and eat a live chicken. From my house I saw several buzzards light in a yard and hop into the midst of a flock of young chickens, about two weeks old, I imagine, and attempt to catch them. The chickens this time got away. A few days later I heard a squawking in the same yard. I ran out and saw a buzzard sitting on a fence with a chicken in its beak. Quite calmly the buzzard swallowed the chicken, which was still kicking, gulped, and flew away. I am positive of the identification of the buzzard, for, goodness knows, they are too distinctive to be mistaken by one who has seen many of them.

I HAVE mentioned this fact to several naturalists who claimed to know something about birds, and each said that they had never heard of a buzzard doing this. I also talked with Dr. William Beebe about the matter, and he was inclined to believe that buzzards habitually do this. At least, he said that buzzards do not eat carrion by choice but because it's the easiest food to procure. He also said that he finds that buzzards make excellent pets and become quite clean in habits if taken care of and given clean food to eat. I doubt if I could get on any such terms with Jim Crow.

What can you offer on the subject? I admit I doubted my own vision when I saw the buzzard eating the live chicken and I have been unable to find anywhere any data of similiar incidents except from Dr. Beebe, who, as you know, is quite an ornithologist, or was before he went nuts over deep-sea fishing.

—HAYNES TRÉBOR

Mr. Harriman's reply:

Long Beach, Cal.

All I know regarding vultures or any kind eating living creatures is what I learned more than half a century ago in Minnesota, when buzzards ate a few new born lambs on farms, while they were still wet from the wombs of the ewe, and the farmers declared that it was due to the fact that the lambs

had never dried off and so had a carrion odor and flavor that attracted the devilbirds.

It is a fact that the condors of South America are feared by men who travel the mountains, and it is believed generally, I have been told, that if a man falls from any injury they take his eyes out very promptly. At any rate I would not trust the fellows far—they are such hideously filthy birds and sassy as the devil. That is all I know of them except that I have had to get busy and drive them away from injured animals many times and think they might use those infernal beaks on a sore or cut. It is the general belief that they eat only carrion and the laws protect them from gunners. I have had a lot of fun with them before now picking feathers from wings and tails with my beltgun.

—E. E. HARRIMAN

A NOTE from Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson relative to his novelette in this issue:

Bridgehampton, L. I.

There are probably few Camp-Fire readers who have not heard the term "shavetail" applied to a second lieutenant, but I wonder how many of them know the origin of the term. The name was first applied in the Army to the green mules when they arrived to do their service, it being the dealer's custom to shave a mule's tail for several inches down its length, leaving a tuft of hair at the end. The transition of the name from green mules to green second lieutenants seems to have been an easy and natural process in the mind of the soldier.

The regular Army soldier, be it said to his credit, has generally regarded the shavetail officer with a certain amount of kindly tolerance, making allowances for his youth and inexperience, an attitude not always earned by the war time second lieutenant, known often as "the ninety day wonder," "the Sears Roebuck looie," and other terms not so complimentary. Some of the Camp-Fire will remember the story of the old French woman who was saving up her money, earned serving *vin rouge* to the doughboys, and contemplating a trip to America, where she hoped to meet the famous Madame B., the mother of all those second lieutenants.

BUT where the "shavetail" did not attempt to cover ignorance by arrogance, the soldier was more than willing to meet him halfway, realizing that the junior subaltern officer's life was a hard one. One of the verses of "Parlez-Vous", that famous battle song of the Western Front, takes cognizance of this fact:

The second lieutenant goes over the top,
Parley-vous,
The second lieutenant goes over the top,
Parley-vous
The second lieutenant goes over the top
For he's expendible, is he not?
Hinky-Dinkey, parley-vous!

But while the mortality records showed that the much abused class of officers wearing the tiny gold bar certainly did their share, I can imagine a tired soldier, his arm weary from saluting, paraphrasing Lincoln by saying that "God must love the shavetails, he made so many of them!"

IN THIS story, "Shavetail," I have tried to show the impact of a certain type of newly joined second lieutenant upon a staid old regiment of cavalry. Any of the Camp-Fire readers who have served in these old regiments will know what I mean when I say that each of those regiments has a character and soul of its own, which differs from all other regiments, as distinctly as the character and soul of an individual differs from all other individuals. In the older regiments the differentiation is even more marked because they have the force of tradition behind them. In the Second Cavalry we were very proud of the fact that the regiment had been the old Second Dragoons and had fought through practically every war in the history of the country. We were also proud of the fact that the orange yellow facings of the old Second Dragoons had been adopted as the cavalry color for all cavalry regiments and persists today.

Seeing what value men place upon comparatively small things, it has always seemed to me a pity that the staid and portly old gentlemen in the Quartermaster Corps who regulate such matters as uniforms do not allow some small differentiation in regimental facings so as to accentuate regimental individuality and increase a man's pride in his unit. The British show more wisdom in this respect, realizing that pride in the regimental name will hold many a battalion doggedly to its task when patriotism for the country at large might not do the trick.

MEN who are called upon to fight and die need something tangible upon which to center their loyalties, and the regiment provides this. There was no need of fostering this instinct in the old Second Cavalry, nor in many other old regiments, but the 2nd happened to be my first regiment, and has succeeded in retaining all the glamour of first love in spite of assignment to many another regiment thereafter.

My striker, who served with me for years, has joined me in civil life, but is still a staunch Second Cavalryman in spirit, and often, when the children are asleep, the house is quiet and the dishes are finished, we foregather in the kitchen, being joined by another ex-Second man, now working as chauffeur for one of my friends, and the three of us talk of the glory of the Second Horse, forgetting the duties and claims of the present and being wafted back on wings of memory to the days when each morning was the start of a fresh adventure, when we rode with steel at our sides and steel on our heels, heard the thunder of galloping squadrons and the arrogant bronze notes of the trumpets and rejoiced exceedingly that we were part and parcel of that living, breathing, entity called the Second Cavalry.

Such hold has the old regiment upon us. I hope that, in the story, some of you Camp-Fire readers who have galloped, "left front into line" will recognize a touch or two of the old days, and that you who have not had that experience will gain a little understanding of our affection for the crossed sabres.

—MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

I'VE received quite a few letters of comment on T. S. Stribling's recent story in our pages, "Mogglesby". Most of them touch on the subject of woman stealing by the great anthropoids, but no one has yet come forward with any concrete evidence, or even authentic report. I have not myself seen the moving picture referred to in the following letter, but whether or not it was honestly executed, you will remember that Stribling did *not* maintain his story was unvarnished fact.

New York City

It so happened that I did not read T. S. Stribling's fantasy, "Mogglesby", in the June first issue until last Friday. On Saturday evening while passing one of our local moving picture theatres I noticed the advertisements for the film, "Ingagi", which, the advertisements showed, meant "Gorilla". Having just finished Stribling's story, I thought it would be interesting to see some actual pictures of their lives and habits.

To my surprise, as the film progressed through scenes of the equipping of the safari and later of its progress into big game country, the voice of the lecturer imposed on the film stated that rumors of the woman stealing propensities of the Ingagi caused the safari to turn from its course and to visit the tribe which was receiving the attentions of the gorillas. Up to this time all of the scenes had been those of hunting and travel. Herds of animals were shown and specimens of python, leopard and other animals had been secured.

WHEN the expedition reached the native village for which it had turned aside, scenes of native dances were shown strongly reminiscent of those related in "Mogglesby". One of these showed a witch-doctor, garbed as a gorilla, capering about a fire with other savages shuffling and dancing about to the beat of tom-toms.

We were told that these natives were about to give a woman to the gorillas. Next we were shown the woman, abandoned by the natives and sitting on a log waiting. Soon a gorilla appeared, seized the woman and carried her for some distance before one of the expedition's hunters shot him. Scenes were also shown of nude native women, also some strange looking children, accompanied by two or three gorillas, walking in the jungle.

THE manner in which this picture developed led the audience to believe that they were witnessing scenes from an authentic expedition, yet I could recall nothing in scientific magazines about it and it was evident that were the scenes authentic the film would have created a furore in the scientific world.

There was also a decidedly "fishy" aspect about the scene where the gorilla seized the woman and was later killed. The cameras appeared so close to the animal that the clicking of the machines would have been audible, nor were they any too well concealed. One camera was visible in the picture, so that there were undoubtedly two being used.

LATER, in discussing the picture with a friend, I was told that the "gorilla" is now suing the producers for his pay, and that other suits have also been filed for illegal use of the scenes of the big game and that these had been borrowed from the archives of various film producers in California, or in other words that the picture is a "fake".

Whether this is the case I do not know. But if the picture is authentic it would seem to prove that "Mogglesby" had more than a germ of truth. If the picture is a "fake", oh well, it's just another picture. But, in any event I would like to hear from any of those off on the edges of the glow of Camp-Fire who can give us some first hand dope on the subject, as you kindly invited them to do in your note to "Mogglesby". —JOHN D. SCHMIDT, JR.

Apropos of all this, it is interesting to recall that Carl Akeley, who made his famous study of the gorillas in the Lake Kivu district of Central Africa, and who probably knew as much about their life and habits as any man, always scoffed at the idea of their woman stealing. An old wives' tale, he called it, imparted by glib natives to credulous white traders, and disseminated by the latter. It was, I think, when he was working on his notable gorilla group for the Boston Natural Museum, that he was instrumental in having Fremiet's dramatic statue relegated to the limbo of the museum basement. He felt it only tended to sustain an outworn legend. I suppose every one has seen copies of this bronze somewhere or other. Most melodramatically it depicts a gorilla of tremendously ferocious aspect, stalking off with a woman tucked under his arm.

Incidentally, Akeley maintained that contrary to popular belief, far from being aggressive, gorillas are creatures of unusual mildness! —A. A. P

ASK Adventure

For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere

Deer Head

ADVICE on preparing the trophy.

Request:—"How should a deer head be skinned and prepared for the taxidermist?"

—IRWIN KEEPES, Detroit, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. Seth Bullock:—A deer head should be opened along the back of the neck, never along the throat. It should be cleaned of all fat and flesh, salted thoroughly until dry and then shipped —or if there is a taxidermist near you take the whole head and neck, or the hide while green. Never ship a green hide.

It will be of great help to the taxidermist if you take the skull to him; also less expensive, for you will not have to pay for an artificial head.

The measurements that will help the operator are: The circumference of the neck just behind the jaws; the middle of the neck; and the neck where it joins the shoulders.

South America

FROM a stone on a string to a lead ball on a rawhide rope—the *bola.*

Request:—"Can you give me any information on the *bola* as used in South America?"

—EDWIN SUTHERLAND, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—The *boldeadores,* sometimes called *bolas,* are a refinement of the two stones on a rawhide that the aborigines were using on the advent of the Spaniards. Now iron or lead balls are used on sennit plaited rawhide strings. There are two-ball, three-ball—and the one-ball used for striking and killing game. Some natives are very adept and make tremendous throws by using the speed of the horse and the nine-foot swing of the rawhide to give tremendous force.

They also use the lariat for roping, but it is fastened to the rear instead of the horn of the saddle and the horse turns tail and pulls when the animal is roped.

Money

PORCELAIN and glass tokens once passed as local currency in China.

Request:—"Is there such a thing as glass money or porcelain money?"

—EUGENE DEMENT, National Home, Wisconsin

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood:—Porcelain tokens, which were used locally for money, were issued by a number of Chinese companies in Siam, roughly, between the years 1777 and 1877. There were several thousand varieties. A few of the tokens were made of glass instead of porcelain; also, there are a few glass tokens used in China, but very little is known of these.

Various cataloguers are prone to describe certain glass weights used in Egypt from 1500 to 500 years ago as glass money. These weights are found in large quantities, but I think there is no real authority for considering them anything but weights.

Meteor

A BAFFLING crater in Arizona.

Request:—"What is the latest development in the diggings at Meteor Crater near Winslow, Arizona? Has the main body of the meteor been reached? If so, of what material is it?"

—M. M. ASHLEY, Ft. Wayne, Indiana

Reply, by Mr. E. E. Harriman:—The last report I received on Meteor Crater stated that the drill had encountered a large body at a great depth and it was so hard that it ruined a rock drill of special temper and the sample brought up held a few tiny

particles of diamond, which would indicate meeting the meteor. As the sought for body is estimated to be of immense weight and size, there is no chance that it will be resurrected, but the fact that the drill found and discovered it to be so hard is a triumph in itself. Remember that it struck with a force that threw the sand into a ring mound about the hole and pulverized the sand as fine as milled flour and you get a slight idea of the force of that fall. The size of the crater, the height of the ring made and the tonnage of sand displaced are all almost incredible. My informant stated that there would be a cessation of exploration for a time at least.

Scorpion

UNPLEASANT but not dangerous.

Request:—"What, if anything, can be done to rid premises—especially basements and sheds—of scorpions? These pests are found here not infrequently and I understand their sting is serious. They run in size from one to two inches or more and are dark brown, or reddish brown, in color."

—WILDER ANTHONY, Ben Lomond, California

Reply, by Dr. S. W. Frost:—The effect of the bite of the scorpions of the United States may be painful, but there is no evidence that they are fatal.

I have never heard of scorpions occurring in houses in numbers sufficient to warrant control. Is it possible that they have been taken into the basement on firewood? A tight basement with screened windows should prevent them from gaining entrance. If they have been taken in on wood or in a similar way I would suggest dusting with sodium fluoride.

Archery

THE bow and arrow has staged a comeback as a game shooting weapon, and it should be remembered that beyond the target range the archer must abide by the hunting laws of his State.

Request:—"Do you have to have a special kind of permit to shoot a bow in the country, or anywhere outside of an archery range?"

—ARTHUR BOWLEY, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—In regard to the getting a special permit to shoot, I understand that in some States there has been (or at least has tried to be) some very unfair and intolerant legislation against archers, because of prejudice of certain parties against something they are unfamiliar with (which seems to be human nature), but as far as my own experience is concerned, I have not encountered any such law. Such States as I have any record of do require you to have a hunting license for the bow just as if you were hunting with a gun. This requirement is in my opinion a fair and just requirement, and I believe that in Pennsylvania this is the law.

I do understand that in Arizona there is a law against hunting with the bow under the mistaken idea that it is not humane. For a man to object to hunting with the bow and then take a shotgun and slobber lead all over the landscape with its consequent crippling and suffering of game, is straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel, and I hope that Arizona has repealed this law by this time.

THE *Ask Adventure* service is free. Send your questions direct to the expert whose field covers them. And *don't* forget to enclose a self-addressed envelope and full postage for reply.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, Copeland Manor, Libertyville, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, 1055 Boulevard East, Weehawken, N. J.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Camping JOHN D. LONG, 610 W. 116th St., New York City.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.* EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons, *pole arms and armor.*—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 835 Gladden Road, Grandview, Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., 821 Elmswood Ave., Evanstown, Illinois.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., 821 Elmswood Ave., Evanstown, Illinois.

Camping and Woodcraft HORACE KEPHART, Bryson City, N. C.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting; development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystalography, color and chemical compositions.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.* WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care Tropical Plant Research Foundation, 312 14th St., S. W., Washington, D. C.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration, work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 333 Fifty-fourth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 507 No. Harper, Hollywood, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFRA. R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3758 81st Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 7 Block "S", Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS. The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Linguistics and Ethnology *(a) Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology. (b) Languages and the problems of race migration. (c) Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care of *Adventure.*

Old Songs That Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON, care of *Adventure.*

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, 73 Farmington Ave., Longmeadow, Mass.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Boxing CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH, 445 West 23rd St., New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping; names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of all American documental steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all Government owned vessels.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 3 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean. (Siberian Waters).*—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

South Sea Islands JAMES STANLEY MEAGHER, 4322 Pine Street, Inglewood, Calif.

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

Borneo CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa TOM L. MILLS. *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States; and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, 706 Broadway, West New Brighton, S. I., N. Y.

Asia Part 3 *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 4 *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 5 *Western China, Burma, Tibet.*—CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn., and DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 7** *Japan.*—SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL, San Rafael, Calif., and OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

Asia Minor.—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

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Africa Part 7 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—W. C. COLLINS, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 8 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 9** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, 14837 Grand River Ave., Detroit, Michigan.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe Part 1 *Jugo-Slavia and Greece.*—CAPT. WM. W. JENNA, West Point, New York.

Europe Part 2 *Albania.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 3 *Finland, Lapland and Russia.*—In the case of Russia, political topics outside of historical facts will not be discussed. ALEKO E. LILIUS, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—THEODORE VON KELER, 153 Waverly Place, New York City.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, W. C. 2, London, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Street, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

Europe Part 9 *Belgium*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 10 *Switzerland.*—DR. ALBERT LEEMAN, Kramgasse, 82, Bern, Switzerland.

Europe Part 11 *France.*—CYRUS S. ROBERTS, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 12 *Spain.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

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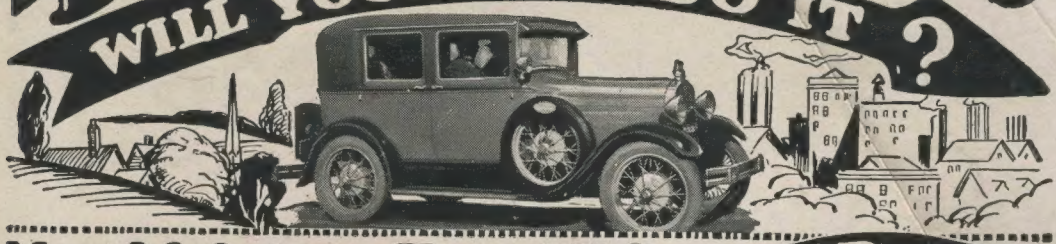

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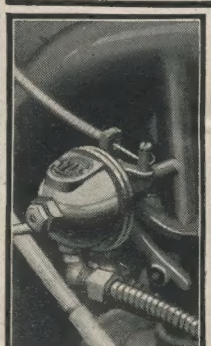

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